

BHAVAN'S BOOK UNIVERSITY

GITA SANDESH

MESSAGE OF THE GITA

Swami Ramdas

GENERAL EDITORS

K. M. MUNSHI

R. R. DIWAKAR



BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN, BOMBAY



What Bharatiya Vidya Stands for

Bharatiya Shiksha must ensure that no promising young Indian of character having faith in Bharat and her culture Bharatiya Vidya should be left without modern educational equipment by reason merely of want of funds.

2. Bharatiya Shiksha must be formative more than informative, and cannot have for its end mere acquisition of knowledge. Its legitimate sphere is not only to develop natural talents but so to shape them as to enable them to absorb and express the permanent values of Bharatiya Vidya.

3. Bharatiya Shiksha must take into account not only the full growth of a student's personality but the totality of his relations and lead him to the highest self-fulfilment of which he is capable.

4. Bharatiya Shiksha must involve at some stage or other an intensive study of Sanskrit or Sanskritic languages and their literature, without excluding, if so desired, the study of other languages and literature, ancient and modern.

5. The re-integration of Bharatiya Vidya, which is the primary object of Bharatiya Shiksha, can only be attained through a study of forces, movements, motives, iddas, forms and art of creative life-energy through which it has expressed itself in different ages as a single continuous process.

6. Bharatiya Shiksha must stimulate the student's power of expression, both written and oral, at every stage in accordance with the highest ideals attained by the great literary masters in the intellectual and moral spheres.

7. The technique of Bharatiya Shiksha must involve—

(a) the adoption by the teacher of the *Guru* attitude which consists in taking a personal interest in the student; inspiring and encouraging him to achieve distinction in his studies; entering into his life with a view to form ideals and remove psychological obstacles; and creating in him a spirit of consecration: and

(b) the adoption by the student of the *Shishya* attitude by the development of—

(i) respect for the teacher,

(ii) a spirit of inquiry,

(iii) a spirit of service towards the teacher, the institution, Bharat and Bharatiya Vidya.

8. The ultimate aim of Bharatiya Shiksha is to teach the younger generation to appreciate and live up to the permanent values of Bharatiya Vidya which flowing from the supreme art of creative life-energy as represented by Shri Ramachandra, Shri Krishna, Vyasa, Buddha and Mahavira have expressed themselves in modern times in the life of Shri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, Swami Dayananda Saraswati, and Swami Vivekananda, Shri Aurobindo and Mahatma Gandhi.

9. Bharatiya Shiksha while equipping the student with every kind of scientific and technical training must teach the student, not to sacrifice an ancient form or attitude to an unreasoning passion for change; not to retain a form or attitude which in the light of modern times can be replaced by another form or attitude which is a truer and more effective expression of the spirit of Bharatiya Vidya; and to capture the spirit afresh for each generation to present it to the world





SWAMI RAMDAS

आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः ।

Let noble thoughts come to us from every side

—Rigveda, 1-89-i

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GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

THE Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan—that Institute of Indian Culture in Bombay—needed a Book University, a series of books which, if read, would serve the purpose of providing higher education. Particular emphasis, however, was to be put on such literature as revealed the deeper impulsions of India. As a first step, it was decided to bring out in English 100 books, 50 of which were to be taken in hand almost at once. Each book was to contain from 200 to 250 pages and was to be priced at Rs. 2.50.

It is our intention to publish the books we select, not only in English, but also in the following Indian languages: Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam.

This scheme, involving the publication of 900 volumes, requires ample funds and an all-India organisation. The Bhavan is exerting its utmost to supply them.

The objectives for which the Bhavan stands are the reintegration of the Indian culture in the light of modern knowledge and to suit our present-day needs and the resuscitation of its fundamental values in their pristine vigour.

Let me make our goal more explicit:

We seek the dignity of man, which necessarily implies the creation of social conditions which would allow him freedom to evolve along the lines of his own temperament and capacities; we seek the harmony of individual efforts and social relations, not in any makeshift way, but within the frame-work of the Moral Order; we seek the creative art of life, by the alchemy of which human limitations are progressively transmuted, so that man may become the instrument of God, and is able to see Him in all and all in Him.

The world, we feel, is too much with us. Nothing would uplift or inspire us so much as the beauty and aspiration which such books can teach.

In this series, therefore, the literature of India, ancient and modern, will be published in a form easily accessible to all. Books in other literatures of the world, if they illustrate the principles we stand for, will also be included.

This common pool of literature, it is hoped, will enable the reader. eastern or western, to understand and appreciate currents of world thought, as also the movements of the mind in India, which, though they flow through different linguistic channels, have a common urge and aspiration.

Fittingly, the Book University's first venture is the *Mahabharata,* summarised by one of

the greatest living Indians, C. Rajagopalachari; the second work is on a section of it, the *Gita* by H. V. Divatia, an eminent jurist and a student of philosophy. Centuries ago, it was proclaimed of the *Mahabharata*: "What is not in it, is nowhere." After twenty-five centuries, we can use the same words about it. He who knows it not, knows not the heights and depths of the soul; he misses the trials and tragedy and the beauty and grandeur of life.

The *Mahabharata* is not a mere epic; it is a romance, telling the tale of heroic men and women and of some who were divine; it is a whole literature in itself, containing a code of life, a philosophy of social and ethical relations, and speculative thought on human problems that is hard to rival; but, above all, it has for its core the *Gita,* which is, as the world is beginning to find out, the noblest of scriptures and the grandest of sagas in which the climax is reached in the wondrous Apocalypse in the Eleventh Canto.

Through such books alone the harmonies underlying true culture, I am convinced, will one day reconcile the disorders of modern life.

I thank all those who have helped to make this new branch of the Bhavan's activity successful.

1, QUEEN VICTORIA ROAD,
NEW DELHI
3rd October 1951

K. M. MUNSHI

PREFACE

Based upon the universal vision granted by the Lord and fully conscious of the truth that the Lord and the devotee, the divine Parent and the child are one, this child—writer—composed this little work and takes leave to place it before the indulgent readers who are for him the very forms of his most beloved supreme Lord and divine Mother.

The teaching of the Gita, in its very construction, is so built up that it might offer a progressive path for the sadhaka, aspiring for liberation and the attainment of the highest spiritual eminence, of perfect union with and absorption in the all-comprehensive being of the Godhead. So this presentation of the Gita reveals the gradual ascending steps in the evolutionary process of the human soul* in his march towards this ultimate goal.

Gita's message is primarily to the man of the world who, according to it, need not renounce the active life and its relations with the world, but can divinise all his actions by a complete dedication of himself in his entire being, both as the immortal soul and as the active worker in the field of Prakriti, to the Lord of the universe.

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* The "Soul" has been referred to as "he" in all places in this book, which perhaps some readers may take exception to, as it is sexless. At the same time, "he" could not be replaced by "it" without altering the sense to a considerable degree.

Sri Krishna holds yogic action as superior to renunciation of action. While the latter signifies a partial denial of life, the former denotes a transformation of the whole life into the very expression of the Godhead, by raising the ignorant soul from the human to his illumined, divine and eternal nature.

All glory be to the Lord—the saviour of mankind—the protector of the weak and helpless—the joy of His devotees—and the guide and friend of the aspiring souls—all glory be to the Lord!

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CHAPTER I

MOHA OR ATTACHMENT

THE Bhagavad Gita holds forth before mankind the highest and the loftiest ideal by attaining which the soul is liberated from all limitations and enjoys the peace and bliss of his inherent state of immortality. The first discourse of the Gita speaks of the one great obstacle that confronts the struggling soul in his effort to realize this blessed state of supreme freedom. Now what is the malady that has possessed the soul which has made his life cramped, narrow and limited, bringing to it a sense of helplessness and often-times utter despair? It is Moha or attachment arising from the individual sense of 'I' in relation to the body and therefrom to the bodies of those near and dear to him by the ties of blood or friendship or material obligations. This Moha causes the mind of man, as a result of its narrow vision, to move in a limited circle identifying itself with the interests of this circle. In this condition the vision of man, starting from his individual centre, radiates only within this circle and gets so much absorbed in it that the humanity and the world outside it are considered entirely separate and foreign to it. It is within the experience of every human being,

who has spent some thought on the mysteries of life, that life lived in this limited vision is a constant source of fear and sorrow. He further knows that the more is this vision expanded the greater is his freedom and the higher is his joy. He feels that he is imprisoned within the fortressed walls raised all round him by his ego, and although he knows that his freedom lies in breaking down these walls, his attempts at such a task prove futile as he is conscious that Moha has enfeebled him and made him unequal to it. It is this Moha that weakened the strong altruistic purpose which fired the bosom of Arjuna to stand up and fight on the battle-field. Similarly, it is this Moha that arrests the march of the aspiring soul when he strives for a wider vision of life and the resultant action. Man gets through Moha so helplessly entangled and caught in the grip of selfishness, greed and lust, thus acting and living solely for himself and his kith and kin, that the wider view of life is shut out from him and the great purpose for which he exists is either denied or forgotten by him. As with Arjuna, so with every one who strives for liberation, it is a conflict between the aspiration for the vaster vision and the crystallised selfishness of an individualistic view of life. Arjuna proposes to abandon the task of a vast and world importance, which was inspired by an extensive vision and for which he was born and in every respect fitted and prepared, being now subdued by the ephemeral interest and concern of his lower human nature. It is the impulse of an egoistic view

of life that enveloped and conquered the greater vision and its action. What was the outcome or effect of such a degrading impulse on him? This is made clear by his own words—that he felt weak, helpless, unmanned and in every way stricken down with fear, doubt and despair. This is the work of Moha and it is perfectly clear that Moha is the arch-enemy that destroys the natural peace, joy and freedom of a human being. Moha has its own ways of defence against the development of the higher and expanded vision. Through plausible arguments it seeks to prove that a life fully tinctured with Moha is the real life and that to transform such a life into a greater one would be undesirable and sinful. There is many an earnest aspirant for perfect liberation who knows well that Moha is the cause of his bondage and the sooner he is freed from its clutches the better it is for him. But how is he to escape its hold when it has so strongly seized him and he feels weak and vanquished by it? He cries out for a life of infinite vision and utter freedom and immortal joy! His condition is similar to that of a bird of the woods struggling hard to be free from the cage in which it is imprisoned.

Moha vitiates the intellect, poisons the springs of emotion and renders the will impotent. In short, Moha totally throws the soul into darkness and delusion, casting on him a magic spell that makes him entirely oblivious of his exalted, free, eternal, all-blissful, divine nature. The soul thus captured and subdued, living and act-

ing in ignorance, experiences nothing but a round of anxiety, grief, perplexity and fear.

Arjuna, the ideal warrior, whose mission in life was to fight for the sake of justice and righteousness, refuses to perform the God-appointed task on the eve of a momentous crisis. The erstwhile intrepid, noble and high-souled hero is now crushed down by the dreadful thought that, by killing his dear kinsmen and revered elders, he was committing a horrible sin. We have heard of the term "the devil quoting scriptures." Here we find Moha citing scriptural injunctions inducing Arjuna to declare that to fight even in a righteous war would involve him in sin while, in fact, real sin consists in performing or rejecting actions through Moha born of the ego-sense. Truly, ego is the root of all sins and Moha is its deadly weapon, and misery and confusion are what they jointly produce.

The succeeding discourses of the Gita gradually develop a system of thought and discipline, by following which Sri Krishna, with all the authority of a God-incarnate, definitely asserts that man can conquer this ego and Moha and attain the inexpressible supreme status of the Godhead, that is, of a state of perfect liberation, peace and bliss, and still be active in the affairs of the world.

CHAPTER II

JNANA OR ILLUMINATION OF THE INTELLECT

WHEN thus Moha or attachment weakens the will of Arjuna for the great action to which he is called, in keeping with the duty of a warrior that he is, the supreme Godhead dwelling in the hearts of all creatures and present before him as Sri Krishna, the incarnation, rouses him by words that condemn his faint-heartedness and cowardly impotence. Usually, in the progress of the soul, in his march towards a lofty ideal involving an action prompted by a generous impulse created by an outlook of an expanded vision, the egoistic and selfish instinct in him subdues that noble impulse rendering him inactive and helpless. At this juncture, the one thought of his own body and the interest of those dear and near to him shuts out the higher vision and the greater action made possible by that magnificent impulse. Here the aspirant meets with a check which makes him turn his back upon the new adventure. Moha taking hold of the intellect distorts its workings and saps the power of the will. Now, God, within the heart of the human being from within or in the form of a teacher outside, sets out first to awaken the intellect and then illumines it with a keen sense of discrimination. Moha, starting

from the heart and possessing the intellect, mind and will, throws the soul into ignorance, and the result is confusion and misery. Hence to be free from weakness and sorrow, the first thing necessary is to eradicate Moha from the heart. This could be done only when the intellect is enlightened and the soul is made to understand the right implications regarding the great problem of life and death.

The attack which the divine Teacher directed against Moha is frontal, straight and forceful. Moha denotes attachment to the changing and perishable beings and objects. The soul bound by Moha thinks that his body and its perishable relations are all in all for him. Any loss or destruction of these means for him great pain or sorrow. To mourn over their loss appears to him quite natural and necessary. Arjuna's or any other similarly conditioned soul's predicament is clearly due to a mind absorbed in the consciousness of the body and the external objects. Fear, grief and anxiety can cease only when the mind is withdrawn and freed from its attachment to these perishable things. To take the mind off the objects and disassociate it from them is the one thing needed.

The soul has, in his state of bondage, forgotten his eternal and divine nature. To free the mind from attachment is to attain the awareness of soul's immortal, unchanging and all-pervading being. Hence the awakened intellect of Arjuna is made to discriminate between the destructible

and the indestructible. He is asked to break the link of his mind with the former and unite it with the latter. He is told that all bodies and all forms are by nature subject to change and destruction, but the in-dwelling Atman, who is the one all-pervading Truth and who is seated equally in all creatures and things, is eternal, ever unchanging and imperishable. When the forms perish, when the bodies die, this supreme Atman does neither perish nor die. So, to be attached and have deep concern and anxiety for the forms is utter ignorance.

Sri Krishna exhorts with great emphasis, "O Arjuna, do not grieve for those whose death is inevitable and let not your love for them desist you from performing a task which your martial spirit demands of you—a task which is so productive of good to humanity."

A man generally engages himself in a philanthropic action of a narrow or vast significance egged on by ambition for glory, riches or kingdom. A fighter's goal is obviously the suzerainty of a kingdom, whilst with others it is riches, high position, name and fame or some coveted enjoyments of the other world. Arjuna thus took the field of battle with the object of gaining such a reward. Hence victory or defeat meant for Arjuna either the lordship of the kingdom here or a reward of the celestial pleasures in heaven. But Arjuna had already discarded the ambition for kingdom here or joys of heaven above. Stricken with despondency he had said that he would

rather be a mendicant living upon alms than slay his kinsfolk and masters for any reward here or hereafter.

Sri Krishna points out that, by abandoning the fight, he would not only lose the gains he would have by his victory or death on the battle-field, but he would also be casting a stain on his hitherto unsullied honour of a hero. Sri Krishna urged these considerations not because these alone were all-sufficient for inducing Arjuna to stand up and fight—unshakably rooted in the supreme purpose and determination of the God-ordained war—but to make them a basis for the higher teaching he had yet to declare.

All creatures and beings in the universe, as seen in their varied diversity and taken in their totality, possess two aspects of existence—both having their root in, and emanating from, the one transcendent source of Truth. The one is apparent and perishable and the other is non-apparent and non-perishable. Viewed from this supreme unity and oneness of all life and existence both in their manifest and unmanifest aspects, the slayer and the slain, resolve into one, or, in other words, the slayer slays not nor is slain. The eternal, unmanifest is not touched or acted upon by sword, fire, water or air and the Atman is the same in all the manifestations. This philosophy is hammered on the intellect of Arjuna to liberate it from the delusion which Moha has generated in it. Truly, unless the soul is freed from his longings and attachment for the

visible, changing and perishable things, he cannot realize his identity with the eternal, immutable and all-pervading Truth of his being. Realization of this immortal state of the soul's existence alone frees him from the thraldom of action and from the touch of fear, doubt and grief.

Therefore, Sri Krishna says, the way for Arjuna is to rise above the notion of pleasure and pain, success and failure, sin and virtue arising out of an attachment for, and identification with, the flesh. This is done by a lucid process of thought and discrimination distinguishing the real from the unreal, so as to fix himself steadfastly in the Atman, who is the inactive, birthless and deathless reality.

At this stage of Sri Krishna's discourse, we have a clear enunciation of a state beyond the Dwandwas by attaining which a man can live in the world doing all actions without incurring sin. What confuses the mind before transcending the pairs of opposites is the conflicting injunctions of the Shastras in regard to their rules of right and wrong actions. Even the ancient Vedic scriptures do not point out an absolute path of action. Since they enjoin on man certain rituals and ceremonies for obtaining material happiness here or in the other world, his mind is naturally caught in a maze of clashing Dharmas belonging to the three Gunas of the lower human nature. Vedas deal with the works relating to the three Gunas—Sattwa, Rajas and Tamas. So long as man is subject to the Dharma of these Gunas,

however exalted the Dharma be in the ascending scale of these qualities, in moments of a crisis, such as the one which Arjuna had to face, the mind falls a prey to doubt and uncertainty. By rising above the Gunas alone can man find the true criterion for life and action here. Since the Dharma or conduct of life set down by the Vedas is based upon works performed for a particular reward in view, which pertains to the sense enjoyments, it tends, instead of effecting the liberation of the soul, to rivet more firmly than ever the chain of Karma on the soul deluded with ignorance. Hence real freedom in life, Sri Krishna declares, lies in transcending the Gunas, which is same as freeing oneself from the obligations of the Dharma upheld by the Vedas.

Gita is a message that leads the soul from a life of bondage to a state of complete freedom and joy. It prescribes a rule of action free from the taint of desire which is the sole cause of the soul's journey in the cycles of births and deaths. So, man must live in the field of action for the sake of action alone and not for the fruits which the action brings. The soul's desire gives rise to attachment for action and its rewards.

Now, how is one to do action without longing for its fruit? It is done by the soul's union with the supreme Truth beyond the workings of the Gunas. Here again the divine Teacher asks Arjuna to make use of the discriminative faculty of the intellect and identify himself with the supreme Atman. When the intellect is purified

by the meditation of the reality, the conception of good and evil deeds is destroyed. The pure intellect enlightened with wisdom is attained by means of steady concentration and contemplation. The yoga here described is of a state of perfect harmony and equilibrium.

With all the exposition of the yogic condition presented in the foregoing teaching, the inquiring mind of the aspirant would still wish to know what would be the external signs and mode of life of a man who has attained this yoga. Hence the question of Arjuna on this subject. Sri Krishna replies that the yogi is he whose desires of the heart are dead and who is ever content in his perfect union with the blissful Atman. He would dispassionately look upon the pleasures and pains resulting from contact with sense objects. He would be free from wrath, hatred and fear. Having perfect control over his mind and senses, he would ever remain calm and unaffected by good or evil fortune and by the effects of attraction and repulsion. It is not sufficient for the yogi merely to reject the objects of sense but the desire for them must be uprooted from the heart. This becomes possible only when the soul is fully merged in, and has become perfectly one with, the all-pervading existence of God.

It is evident from what has been said that the heart's desire and the Moha arising therefrom are causes of man's downfall. So long as his mind is thinking on the objects of sense he can-

not rise to the height of yoga. The purified Buddhi achieved through high concentration is prone to be dragged down by the powerful pull of the mind and the senses. The moment desire or Kama springs up in the mind and waxes strong, feeding upon the objects through the senses, it gives birth to wrath, which hurls the soul into delusion with the ultimate result that the awakened and illumined intellect is again obsessed by the blinding darkness of ignorance. Therefore the peace and the harmony of equilibrium or yoga is maintained intact by complete self-control through a strict self-discipline. By this practice the fallen aspirant regains his lost yoga.

So to subdue desire and the resultant Moha, the restless mind and the senses have to be brought under subjection of the Atman. By this practice the fever of the senses is abated and the rush of the mind is checked and stopped, and the soul enjoys the unshakable peace of the Eternal.

Now the yogi awakes in the realm of the immortal spirit and sleeps with regard to the external world-manifestation—whereas the case of the ignorant soul is quite the reverse. The yogi's desire being dead, and he, being free from egoism, and unruffled by the outside events and happenings, attains the Eternal. Even he, who is fixed in the Eternal at the time of the dissolution of his body, is absorbed in the immortal being of God.

CHAPTER III

KARMA YOGA — STANDARD OF FREE ACTION

IN the first chapter Moha has been pointed out as the sole cause of Arjuna's despondency and the consequent spirit of inaction that overtook him. The second chapter deals with the first step which the despondent soul should take for freeing himself from the clutches of Moha. Through Moha man holds that his body and the visible manifestation are the only reality and that his earth-bound spirit is justified in attaching itself to these external objects. To remove this misconception the deluded mind is made aware of the changeless, static, infinite and omnipresent Atman, beyond the three Gunas, and the resulting dynamics of nature, as its real being. So the intellect of man is awakened to its hitherto dormant sense of discrimination between the mutable and the immutable, the perishable and the imperishable, the individual and the universal, the seen and the unseen, the form and the formless, the non-eternal and the eternal. Arjuna is told that the Atman, who is free from the Gunas and their works, is immovable and actionless, and perfect oneness with the Atman will grant him the freedom of the Eternal. Arjuna accepts this part of the yoga, which is attained through discrimina-

tion, but fails to understand why there should be action performed by one who has reached this high status. This teaching so far appears to uphold the attitude of renunciation of action which Arjuna had assumed with regard to the war which he looked upon as a terrible calamity. So, naturally, the doubt crosses his mind as to where was the necessity and sanction for him to enter into this work of slaughter of his kith and kin. Sri Krishna sets about clearing the doubt of Arjuna in this chapter. He says that even after the realization of the soul as eternal and infinite Atman, a man through the divine force of Prakriti has still to perform Karma in the world. He proceeds to dilate upon this Karmic aspect of existence. He declares that perfection consists in the performance of Karma in the freedom and detachment of the Atman. Let not action be done from the promptings of desire but according to a certain rule or Dharma imbued with a spirit of sacrifice and non-attachment. Better than Tamasic inaction are works performed as a sacrifice to the gods for obtaining earthly or celestial enjoyments. But this is an inferior way of action. Worse is the condition of one who, being rooted in the ego, toils for sheer sense pleasures. Fruitless and degrading is this life. But the highest state in which action should be performed is by remaining ever fixed in the bliss of the Atman. Verily, for him who is enjoying the bliss of the Eternal, there is no lower or even higher motive for action left. Indeed God as Nirguna or Atman is all sufficient in bliss and peace. But

still He projects forth from His being the vast manifestation of Prakriti and He is ever active through His power in the varied movements therein. So to attain the Atman is not to become actionless. Action has still to be done without attachment. However, it is incumbent upon the aspirant to perform action in the earlier stages without desiring for its fruit, but with the sole object of reaching the supreme status of the Atman and thus be free from the bondage of Karma.

In this connection, to quote a concrete case of a perfect Karma Yogi, the instance of Janaka is cited. He was a great king who ruled over a kingdom with an equal vision experiencing, all the time, the bliss of his complete union with, and absorption in, God. The man of God-realization can take refuge in inaction and solitude, ever merged in the calm and immovable spirit of God, but the superior and more exalted way for him is to be active through Prakriti for the good of mankind. Thus it is shown that work is essential for the aspirant striving for liberation and also for the liberated, who finds delight in all actions as they proceed as a spontaneous outflow from the fountain-head of the all-blissful Reality—his true being.

While in the field of Karma, to be unaffected by action, i.e. to have no impress of it left on the pure spirit dwelling within, is to eliminate the artificial sense of actorship and to dissolve the ego through a complete surrender of all actions

to God. Prakriti made up of the Trigunas is ever active in the triple nature and tendencies of these Gunas and the Atman is ever the unaffected witness of the active Prakriti. Through the knowledge of this truth alone does man attain perfect yoga.

At this stage of Sri Krishna's teaching He voices a note of warning that this great secret of yoga should not be taught to the unprepared and uninitiated. Because the ordinary mind, untutored and undisciplined, will not be able to understand aright the inner sense with which the teaching is pregnant. In other words, it might as well be said that this mystery of the yoga can be grasped and put into practice only by one who is by discipline fitted for it.

On a broad basis a rule or Dharma for action is enjoined upon the progressive soul, namely, that he should guide and adjust the works of his Prakriti in accordance with his inherent nature or Swabhava. Here a telling suggestion is made to say that imitation is dangerous and that each soul must seek his evolution on the spiritual path in his own individualistic and unique way and, thus, ultimately attain the fullness of freedom in all the works in which he is made to engage, as they come to him in the usual course.

Then, once again, Arjuna, realizing the difficulty of controlling the mind and senses which are ever conspiring to darken the intellect and make the soul an ignorant tool in the hands of

Prakriti, raises the following question:—"Knowing as the man does that he is the pure, unsullied and sinless Truth, what is it that makes him fall from that state of knowledge and involve himself in the works of sin and misery?" The divine Teacher here reiterates what He said before that it is desire and wrath born of Rajo-guna, which are the mortal foes of an awakened soul. When desire enters the mind, heart and senses of man, that very instant the illumined soul of man is again enveloped in darkness and he turns into a frantic and deluded creature. Therefore the command is to kill this powerful enemy called desire, the root cause of man's fall from his divine state. Destruction of desire is possible only after the soul has realized his true being and nature as the supreme Atman beyond the senses, mind and the intellect. The Power of the Atman is irresistible because it is invincible. This divine Power, by eradicating desire and throwing its full blaze of light on the soul, purifies and fills with bliss all the movements of the intellect, heart, senses and the body—thus transmuting his relative life of Prakriti—in all its activities—into a blissful expression of the changeless and eternal Divine.

CHAPTER IV

KNOWLEDGE OF THE ATMAN

SRI KRISHNA, the Jagadguru seated in the hearts of all beings and things, first subdued the Moha that had possessed the heart of Arjuna by taking his mind from the perishable object to the immortal Atman pervading through all life and form. Next, the divine Teacher goes to prove that even after the realization of the actionless Atman, the external play of action through the various organs of Prakriti is possible and necessary and is perfectly in consonance with the Atmic realization. God is not merely a silent and immovable spirit but is also the active Master and Ruler of His universal manifestation. To be in tune with God in the infinite silence and immobility of His existence and still be working in the world for its welfare and uplift through His Shakti, which animates and activates His Prakriti, is the real condition of a perfected yogi.

This exalted yoga, which was neglected and forgotten for some length of time before the Lord chose again to incarnate as Sri Krishna, is now presented to the world making Arjuna a fit disciple and its first recipient. This yoga is now open to all who are the devotees and friends of

the supreme Godhead, Sri Krishna, seated in their own hearts. God declares that He assumes human form from age to age in order to revive the spirit of this yoga for helping mankind in its onward march towards the primeval source and ultimate goal of life. The Lord comes forth as the veritable embodiment of His infinite power and knowledge to establish in the world, when it is filled with evil born of Godlessness, i.e. when the world is ruled solely by the demon of ignorance born of lust, greed and wrath, a Dharma—that is, a righteous standard of action—so that it might direct humanity towards its upward evolution. During this task of universal significance the Lord destroys the antagonistic forces manifest as evil-doers thus protecting the aspiring and pious souls from their tyranny and oppression. Wherefrom comes the Avatar? Verily, He issues forth and manifests from the heart of humanity, born of the united and almighty will of an oppressed people, in order to destroy the wicked and protect the weak and down-trodden who are crying with one voice for relief and help.

In the above declaration the Lord asserts that He is born from age to age in order to establish this divine rule of righteousness, harmony and peace. It is evident that in the cosmic play of God, conditioned by time and space, there are Avatars of the Supreme God descending from time to time into the different parts of the world. Here it is also made clear that the human soul is born again and again until he is merged in the eternal spirit of God. Sri Krishna definitely says

that he who believes that God can manifest in and as a human form in all His perfection, magnificence and divineness of action goeth into His transcendent and all-inclusive being thereby ceasing to be born again as an ignorant and bewildered soul.

If we examine closely the periods in the history of the world when the great Saviours appeared on the earth for the uplift of humanity, we see that such periods are marked by gigantic upheavals portending an era of misery and oppression born of greed, strife and tyranny. In these times a united wail for relief and liberation issues forth from the heart of mankind, and the combined will of the sufferers and the tyrannised brings down God, who is the universal Truth and Power, to assume a human form as the Avatar or Saviour. God in this special manifestation projected in fact from the depths of the world's creatures, delivers to the ailing humanity a universal message of hope, peace, harmony and freedom. By the descent of the Avatar, God also proves to the world that a human being in that very body can transform himself or herself into an all-powerful, all-beneficent and all-blissful expression of God.

The way to this beatific state is to overcome and destroy the sensual passions and foul emotions by taking complete shelter in God. When the contaminated and sinful soul is made to pass through the fire of this divine wisdom he enters into the being of his supreme Godly nature.

Man's quest is eternal happiness which is same as God. He is active in the various fields of action in the pursuance of this object. By whatever way he strives for happiness, he progresses towards the very fountain of happiness —God. The man, who works for the fruit, keeping in view the objects of sense-enjoyment as his sole aim, still struggles unconsciously towards the immortal seat of bliss—God. The man, who works in the expectation of material reward— the transient objects of happiness—although God grants them to him, makes his progress towards the ultimate freedom and joy by many a stumble, halt and retrogression. Whereas, the man, who keeps God as his goal and works without desiring either the earthly or heavenly rewards, swiftly attains the state of supreme blessedness and peace.

The different paths of action spoken of here as leading ultimately to the Lord relate to the diverse nature or Swabhava implanted in each human soul. According to this Swabhava the external field of action is determined. Thus the Lord says that although He is beyond the conditions of Swabhava or Gunas still they have evolved out of Him, having become manifest in mankind as the four great types—on which was founded the divisions of castes. When a man works according to his Swabhava, without attachment for the work or its fruit, he attains God and remains perfectly unaffected even when he is busily active in the work of his Guna. So it is held that the performance of work through

one's own Guna or Swabhava is imperative and this is true with regard to every human being.

The secret of action in inaction is hidden from the knowledge of even the learned sages. They too are often times perplexed as to what is right and what is wrong action. Sri Krishna in the Gita reveals this supreme secret by the knowledge of which He shows how a man can act in the world without being enmeshed in the bondage of Karma. The Lord says it is useful to possess a clear insight and discernment with regard to action by itself and the difference between righteous and unrighteous action.

It is necessary at first to discriminate between right and wrong action in order to do such action alone as would eventually raise the aspirant beyond the lower intellectual standards of action and enable him to act only from the highest standard of Truth—God, who is the master of all action. Intellectual rule of right action is Nishkamata, i.e. doing work without desire for its fruit. This selection of the rule is done by the discriminative faculty in man. Nishkama Karma leads the aspirant beyond the workings of the intellect or Buddhi to the realization of the Atman or Purusha. Thereafter, the liberated soul ever-dwelling in, and being one with, the divine Being does all actions as the spontaneous expression of the divine energy in all the movements of Prakriti emanating from the supreme Divine, who is at once the static Atman or Purusha and the active energy manifest as Prakriti.

The yogi, who is one with the supreme Reality, who is at once both the aspects and still beyond them, is said to be doing nothing or is perfectly inactive even while performing all actions. He, as the inactive Atman, is ever doing nothing because in Atman there is no motion and hence no action, but as the ever mobile and active Prakriti he is doing all works. So Sri Krishna says he is the sage who thus sees action in inaction and inaction in action. For him there is no more any distinction between doing and non-doing, because both have their source in the one ultimate Reality where they lose all distinction. The Karma-Yogi, who works in this manner holding the great Truth as his only standard for all his works, remains ever fixed in a state of perfect poise and peace. This inner, ever-abiding calmness of the Atman is the result of the complete eradication of desire which is the main incentive for action in the ignorant soul. The realization of the Atman liberates the soul from the clutches of desire, removing the need for any action. The bliss of the Atman is independent of action and its fruits. It is the same to the yogi, whether he works or not, since the sole spring of action—desire—is destroyed. If he engages himself in any work he is in no way a loser or a gainer and, so, his attitude to all works that he does through the flow of divine energy in him and their results is one of perfect equality. Since he has abandoned attachment for action and for its reward, he remains at all times content in the delight of the Atman and performs all actions as be-

longing to the body alone, committing no sin. Whatever comes as a result of his action, be it gain or loss, or success or failure, freed from envy he is ever unruffled, balanced and complacent. Now Karma cannot bind him by its fetters. Since he has attained the supreme harmony in the knowledge of the Atman and his Moha is dead, all his works become a selfless sacrifice leaving upon the doer no impress of its effect or after-effect as if he had not performed any work at all. Eternal is the worker, Eternal is the offering of work and Eternal is the fire in which the work-offering is poured as oblation just as ghee into the sacrificial fire. So he, who through meditation knows that the doer, the work done and the enjoyer of the result of the work are all the one Eternal, lives and merges in the Eternal. But those who are attached to the external forms without realizing the underlying and basic truth of these forms remain in bondage of Karma.

Various kinds of sacrifices are specified in this chapter obtaining with those who are on the Godward path. Some propitiate the gods with sacrifices into the fire and some, through the control of the senses and the mind, sacrifice them into the fire of knowledge, i.e. through various practices of strict discipline subdue the mind and the senses with the object of attaining the knowledge of the Atman. Some again pour out their wealth as a sacrifice in works of charity and benevolence and perform Tapas, meditation, reading of scriptures and strict observance of vows and thus attain purity and concentration of mind. Some

again restrain and regularise the breath by controlling it through Pranayama—thus making the ingoing and outgoing breath as sacrifice. Some others, for cleansing and fixity of mind by means of strict regulation of food, mingle their life breath as a sacrifice into the cosmic vitality of God. Through these various processes or sacrifices the aspirant purifies the mind from its sinful passions and longings. Any remnant of the sacrifice he makes, in the name and for the sake of the supreme Atman, is itself the Amrita or the nectar of immortality. Hence the remains of the food offered to God as a sacrifice, when partaken, leads the eater of it to the eternal status. So sacrifice should be performed by everyone who aspires for happiness here or hereafter.

When all the thoughts are filled with the meditation of the Reality, the Sadhaka obtains divine knowledge and his external sacrifices of objects—which sacrifices are truly inferior to the former—also tend to the same end—the divine knowledge or the knowledge of the Atman. What is true knowledge will be clearly taught to the Sadhaka when he approaches a God-realized sage through prostration at his feet and Nishkama service and gets instructed by him. By the personal effort of the Sadhaka in the work of controlling and purifying the mind and senses, he becomes fit to absorb the teachings of the saint on the exalted attributes of the Atman. Through the Upadesha of the saint—the Lord Himself as Guru in that form—the grace of the Lord within the heart of the disciple pours on him and he

attains divine knowledge. Having thus understood the Truth, the disciple Arjuna is told not to vex his mind any more with doubts but ascend at once to the vision of the Self in all beings and things and then behold both the Self and all forms in the supreme Godhead seated within him.

Sri Krishna assures him that there is no greater purifier and liberator than divine wisdom. The heart illumined with this wisdom frees completely a soul contaminated even by the deepest sin. A man can realize the Atman either through full faith and devotion or through the path of knowledge. Either way, he attains divine peace and joy.

What about the man lacking in faith and initiative—ignorant and full of doubt? For such a soul there is no happiness in this world or in any other. He will lead a life beset with untold worries and griefs.

Bringing the instructive teaching of this chapter to a conclusion, the Lord draws out a finale—that a yogi who has severed himself from the contact of action and its result and destroyed the knot of doubt by the realization of the Atman becomes perfectly free from the bondage of action. So the injunction goes forth, "Cut asunder doubt caused by ignorance and, becoming conscious of your immortal existence as the Atman, be enthroned in the state of yoga and fearlessly discharge the work for which you are appointed."

CHAPTER V

KARMA YOGA — THE SUPERIOR WAY

ARJUNA, even after the full glory of the light of wisdom thrown on his bewildered mind in the previous discourse, does not find the way out of his difficulty. He wants to know conclusively which would be the better course for him, whether the path of action or the path of renunciation of action. To remove this perplexity of the mind Arjuna asks for a decisive word of advice as to which of the two paths is better for him to follow.

Here the rejoinder evoked from the Lord is direct and determinative. The Lord declares that Sannyasa and Karmayoga both take the soul to the realization of the supreme bliss, but Karmayoga is by far superior to Sannyasa. In truth, there is hardly any difference between the two paths. In both cases it is essential that the aspirant should be liberated from the thraldom of desire, hate and the Dwandwas. In both cases, again, the realization of the Atman is the common experience. The states of both the Karmayogi and the Sannyasi in their supreme attainment of immortality are exactly the same, for the result of the one is the result of the other. So, the realized soul does not make any difference

between the yogi engaged in the work of Lokasangraha and the Tyagi who has renounced such action. However, it is to be admitted that yoga or union with the Atman can be effected by everyone only through the performance of Karma. The yogi, who through the knowledge of the Atman and, side by side, through action seeks to reach the ultimate divine Reality, goes to Him with ease and swiftness. Thus the purified yogi, ever fixed in equality, his mind and senses under control, beholding his own self as the self of all beings, is still active in the world without having any effect of action on him. Now all the works and movements of his external and internal organs are going on even after the ego-sense has dissolved in the knowledge of the Atman and he performs actions through all the organs of the body knowing "I am not the doer of anything." Harmonised in the Atman, he becomes the spectator of the senses playing with the object of the senses, himself untouched and unmoved. Now the actions of the yogi assume the divine nature because they are born of the supreme power or Shakti of the Lord. Since in all that he does there is no attachment, he is undefiled by the stain of sin and his condition is compared to a lotus leaf in water which remains unmoist in spite of its contact with water.

He is the true yogi who, having given up Moha, is doing all actions by the body, mind, intellect and the senses, and, surrendering them completely to the divine Shakti moving in Prakriti, remains always pure and unaffected ever

fixed in the Atman. Thus with a balanced mind, abandoning desire for the reward of action, he attains immortal peace. By this act of surrender to the will and workings of Shakti or Prakriti, the yogi naturaly maintains the inner calmness and bliss of the Reality, but he whose works are prompted by desire, craving for the result of his actions, remains in a state of flux and tumult and there is no peace for him. So the way for him is to uproot from the mind the poisonous growth of desire—the cause of egoistic action—and still be living and acting in the body through the realization of his eternal being who is the actionless Atman. The Lord, as this immovable aspect, is unaffected by the works of Prakriti, though the Prakriti works through His will without causing any corresponding movement in the static Atman. The active Prakriti performs all works actuated by the supreme Lord, devoid of the dual sense of good and evil. So the Lord, both as the Atman and Prakriti, is neither responsible nor is affected by the so-called evil action or good action of any body. Those who are ignorant—whose knowledge is clouded by illusion—behold these opposites in the movements of Prakriti and experience the momentary and revolving phases of joy and grief. Those who have destroyed ignorance by the attainment of knowledge possess the light and joy of the Atman at all times just as the sun ever shines. Thus the yogi, through constant meditation on the Atman and having perfect absorption in it, lives and moves possessing all devotion for that Truth

alone. Now the desire, ego, and Moha being dead, he reaches that deathless state from which he does not descend again into the vicious circle of birth and death.

For such a liberated soul all distinctions which an ignorant vision sees in the manifestation are lost. His knowledge of the Atman, i.e. the knowledge that he is the all-pervading, changeless, infinite and eternal Atman, makes him look upon all creatures and beings with an equal sight. Be he a learned man, a cow, elephant, a dog or a much despised outcast, the yogi, seeing in all of them his own Atman, equally loves all, irrespective of external differences. Because of his mind being fixed in the Eternal, he has attained that harmony which is unaffected by the external impact of objects. Thus steadfastly fixed in yoga through the discriminative faculty of the intellect, the Self-realized soul is freed from the emotions of pleasure and pain caused by the gain or loss of things. Since he has discovered within himself an independent and imperishable source of joy, his attachment to outside contacts ceases. Yoga means equilibrium—a state of unalterable peace and bliss of the Atman.

The equal vision based upon the realization of the Atman as the one Reality dwelling in all creatures and beings, removes all externally apparent, ignorance-born distinctions. Sri Krishna describes the vision as enabling the seer to behold his own Atman both in the higher order of

beings, the mankind and also equally in the lower animal kingdom. We may apply this lofty rule of vision to the present day differences which are the cause of so much disharmony and strife. By attaining the vision of the Atman let us behold God alike in the man of the West and the East, in the European and the Asiatic, in the Christian and the Hindu, in the Hindu and the Muslim, the Brahman and the non-Brahman, nay, in the people of all creeds, castes, colours, sects and parties.

It is within the experience of everyone that the pleasure one gets from the touch of the senses with their objects is impermanent and proves to be a source of misery and pain. So the wise soul does not hanker after the delight of the senses. The really happy man is he who can withstand the attack of passions and is ever content in the bliss of the Eternal.

Here we observe Sri Krishna clearly showing the difference that lies between the joy obtained through the senses and the joy resulting from union and oneness with the supreme Atman; while the one is transitory and accompanied by sorrow, the other is changeless, infinite and endless; the one relates to a state of ignorance, delusion and darkness and the other to a state of knowledge, freedom and light.

Here Sri Krishna gives the testimony of the Rishis who, having reached this transcendent and supremely divine state, transmitted to all humanity the secret of this priceless wisdom out of

pure compassion and love for their good. To make the teaching more and more impressive the Lord repeatedly emphasises the one necessity of destroying desire and its offspring Moha totally from the heart by means of raising oneself to one's immortal status.

The striving soul as he progresses on the path of God-realization will naturally have his internal gaze, converging between the eyebrows, drawn upwards, and his breathing automatically restrained and systematised. Thus holding to the highest ideal of liberation, bringing under perfect control the senses, the mind and the intellect, and flinging away all longings, fears, and doubts, he attains the goal.

What often stands as an obstruction in the way of an aspirant's attaining the goal is the ego-sense born of a consciousness of his various acts of self-discipline. He thinks that he is superior to others because of the austerities he performed. Therefore it would be well for the Sadhaka from the very inception of his Sadhana to tutor the mind, from time to time, into thinking that the works of Sadhana done by him are so done by the will and power of the Lord alone. He has to look upon the Lord as Supreme Master of the universe and friend of all creatures, who is ever ready to save those who recognise and submit to His universal sovereignty. By offering up all his acts of Tapasya as a complete sacrifice to Him, the aspirant directly reaches the heights of immortality and peace.

CHAPTER VI

THE DISCIPLINE OF YOGA

IN the foregoing chapters, Sri Krishna points out the cause of man's bondage and how the ignorance, which is responsible for this bondage, can be removed by realizing the omnipresent, blissful and ever free Atman. As a preparation for the attainment of this immortal state He repeatedly asserts that the aspirant, by means of the destruction of desire and the consequent attachment to objects of sense, should lose his individual body-idea and then get absorbed in the all-pervading spirit of God. The question has arisen as to whether a man, living and working in the world performing all actions, can raise himself to the summit of Self-realization. The answer Sri Krishna gives is a definite affirmative. He holds out a path with the double aspect—one of identification through meditation with the inner deathless Atman and the other, running simultaneously, of surrender of all actions to the divine Shakti, active in Prakriti. Here we have an indication of the full and complete Swarup of God—that He is at once these two existences—Purusha or Atman and Prakriti, and also the transcendent Lord, the absolute Master and

Ruler over them. This supreme Lord is the helper and saviour of those who take complete refuge in Him.

Now comes the sixth chapter, as a necessary sequel to the previous ones, in which Sri Krishna proceeds to dilate further upon the subject and cuts out a path for the aspirant to follow, by which he could vanquish the internal enemies who have kept him out of his inherent realm of immortal peace and bliss.

In every process of self-discipline there are stages. At once a Sadhaka cannot soar up to the culminating height. Action taken from the view of the egoistic sense has the tendency to feed the fire of insatiable desire within. So it is enjoined on the aspirant that he should start doing actions without expectation of the fruit but with the sole object of purifying his mind and diminishing the intensity of desire working in it. Nishkama Karma enables the aspirant to easily concentrate his Buddhi on the meditation of the Atman. Until the mind is totally freed from desire and the aspirant is unshakably fixed in yoga, he has to continue his Sadhanas for self-purification unabated. When perfection is reached, the bonds of Sadhana fall off themselves. But before the perfect attainment there should be no renunciation of his spiritual practices.

The true renunciation is principally an inner state of detachment from the net of desire. Desire gives rise to concept or Sankalpa, and Sankalpa drives the soul into the field of action,

vitiated with the expectation of its fruit. The yogi is he who has suppressed once for all the uprising waves of this impulse belonging to the lower nature. The yogi, thus making action as the means, bereft of attachment to the objects of sense or action, and destroying Sankalpa, realizes the permanent placidity of the yogic condition.

Whenever dejection overtakes the aspiring soul in his struggle, let him, by clinging to the Atman through discrimination, faith and surrender, raise himself and regain his lost peace. It depends upon the aspirant himself to make the Atman his friend or his enemy. For the man of Shraddha, God is indeed a most loving mother, friend and guide, whilst the man, who chooses to remain in ignorance of God and denies Him, becomes his own enemy. To be one's own enemy is tantamount to be inimical to God, because, the deeper a man's ignorance grows the more severely does he recede from, and is repelled by, the presence of God.

Now Sri Krishna in a few words, to keep the goal in view of the aspirant, describes the condition of the perfect yogi. In the state of the yoga, the yogi established in absolute peace remains unaffected by the external impact of cold and heat, pleasure and pain, and honour and dishonour. Further, since he has attained the knowledge of the Atman by the control and subdual of the senses, he looks with equality upon a lump of earth, a stone or gold. His attitude will be the

same towards all—be they friends or enemies, countrymen or foreigners, relatives or strangers and pious or wicked.

Then again, some practical hints are offered to the aspirant for his progress towards this blessed state. He who is striving for this yoga must have recourse to a solitary spot where he can, through the powers of meditation, control his thoughts and senses and where desire and greed would not trouble him. Arranging a proper seat, he should concentrate his mind and, stopping the movements of the senses, firm in his seat, practise union of his purified mind with the Atman. He must adopt a posture which does not admit of laziness or fatigue. Thus prepared he must direct his inner vision, by gazing between the eyebrows or at the tip of the nose, towards the supreme splendour of the Atman.

The conditions still to be fulfilled by the aspiring yogi are fearlessness and a strict observance of the vow of celibacy. It must be noted that Brahmacharya is the essential means to quell the passions of the mind. The retention and gradual absorption of the vital fluid in man infuses immense strength and energy in his aspiring will for subduing the tumult and revolt of all the senses. The harmony thus attained by him, whose one thought is God, whose one longing is to realize Him, leads him to the eternal bliss of the Godhead residing in his own heart.

Some more qualities are held necessary for cultivation by the Sadhaka, namely, that he

should have right control over the functions of eating and sleeping. Inordinate eating and excessive sleep on the one hand, and extreme abstinence from food and too much wakefulness on the other, have to be avoided. The Sadhaka knows that irregularity in these two matters proves a great hindrance in his progress towards self-control. He who has rightly regulated the conduct of his life in the matter of sleeping, wakefulness and action conquers even physical pains.

Now the Lord describes a steady upward progress of the aspirant from concentration and meditation to the Supreme Reality of his existence—from mind to Buddhi and from Buddhi to Atman. The restless nature of the mind has to be equalised by a firm fixity of thought on the in-dwelling Truth. The concentration thus attained must be as motionless and steadfast as the flame of a lamp in a place undisturbed by wind. By this method the yogi merges himself in the divine spirit conquering the longings and desires that produce distraction of the mind. Thus discovering the source of inexpressible bliss in the Atman, the yogi becomes perfectly contented in himelf. The supreme joy he now experiences is beyond the senses and intellect and, when he once gets the taste of this joy, he would not fall off from that blessed state. For, he considers that he has come by the greatest gain of his life—greater than any other thing in the world. The joy of the Atman is simply incomparable. Just as a man who has come to light from darkness would ever prefer to remain in light—and would

not turn again towards darkness, so the yogi, when he has once realized that he is the immortal bliss itself, would no longer seek contact with, and enjoyment of, the objects of the senses. The yogi thus firmly fixed in the Truth remains unperturbed even when great misfortunes befall him. So yoga means attainment of endless joy by the destruction of pain and sorrow. This supreme height is reached by only those who possess a strong faith and a cheerful and unworried mind.

The repeated summing up of the teachings is a peculiar method of Gita. The mind to which this discourse is given is insistently reminded of the cause of its ignorance, the way out of it and the goal to be reached. This mode of instruction to the mind is not only extremely charming but is also the most efficacious. So the setting of the Gita has a glory and greatness of its own.

Again Arjuna is enjoined to give up all the desires of the heart through the exercise of control over the senses. Through control of mind coupled with discrimination, the one-pointed mind must be made to dwell completely in the Atman without a single wave of thought rising in it. The natural tendency of the mind is to run out and think of the external objects. At first the aspirant in his practice of concentration will find that, as he tries to fix the mind on the Atman, it falls off from that contact and union by the force of habit. Here the Sadhaka has a stiff struggle to face for fixing the mind on the Atman

for as long a period as possible and to become ultimately one with the Atman to such an extent that there will be no room left for any disruption or any disassociation. This yogi thus possessing a constant vision of the Atman remains in a state of perfect Samadhi or a condition of unalterable peace and joy born of his eternal Being. Freed from sin and turbulent passions he enjoys infinite bliss.

Now what is the vision of such a liberated yogi? By the realization of the Atman, who pervades through the whole universe as its immanent spirit, the yogi sees himself as dwelling in all beings and all beings in his own Self. In short, he sees the supreme unity of all life and manifestation. Sri Krishna declares that the yogi who is blessed with this vision of beholding God everywhere and in everything and also sees everybody and everything in God has reached a supremely Divine State from which he would never fall. Because the yogi, loving and adoring the Lord in the hearts of all beings and creatures, ever one with the all-pervading Atman, whatever he does, he does so abiding in the Lord. Now for the yogi, on account of this pure, glorious and equal vision, the emotions of pleasure and pain have no significance.

Here the Lord has given the first hint of the universal vision to be attained through universal love based upon the perception of one's self as the self of all forms in the manifested universe. Clearly this is the vision of the unseen in the

seen, of the one in the many, of the changeless in the changing, of the eternal in the non-eternal. Here is the secret of the yogi's love flowing out of his heart towards all alike. It is the love born of a divine sight through which he sees his own self in all existences.

Although the Lord has emphasised again and again as to what is to be done in order to tranquillise the restless mind and remove the misconception or illusion of the intellect, there is no way shown in clear terms, as a first imperative, as to how it should be done. As with Arjuna, so with every Sadhaka, the first problem which confronts him when he tries to put into practice this sublime yoga is admittedly the restless and distracting quality of the mind. Arjuna says that the mind is so obstinate and unruly that he finds it extremely hard to subdue. He compares it to the fury of the wind.

In reply Sri Krishna uses two significant words conveying a clear idea of the path to be followed in order to quell the uncontrollable mind —Abhyasa and Vairagya. What do these two terms denote? Abhyasa here means the practice of ceaseless remembrance and meditation of the Reality by means of concentration and steadiness of the mind. This practice meets with failure if the mind has attraction for the objects of the senses. So side by side with the remembrance of the Truth there should exist in the Sadhaka a spirit of indifference or dispassion towards the perishable external forms. Here the discriminative faculty of the intellect

has to play its part of distinguishing the real from the unreal and the imperishable from the perishable. So long as a Sadhaka is not seized with the fire of Vairagya, his meditation of the Reality will not be steady. There is every chance of his breaking off from the yoga. Therefore the Sadhaka should have perfect control over the mind through concentration and purification and the continued meditation of the Reality through discrimination, causing thereby the entire renunciation of desires from the mind, and this double process must continue until he attains to the supreme Brahmic condition.

Here Arjuna raises the question as to what would become of a Sadhaka blessed with faith, but not strong enough to subdue completely the mind as a result of which his mind has swerved from yoga and he could not reach perfection. Does such a Sadhaka, fallen from the height, meet with destruction, becoming ensnared in delusion, like a split cloud and having no chance whatever to be again united in yoga? This doubt of Arjuna is removed by Sri Krishna in his words of great assurance that there is no destruction for him who has struggled in the path of righteousness and Truth. Here the fall denotes a state of withdrawal from the condition of the soul's elevation to pure sattwa-guna which is a step to perfect union with the Atman by the suppression of desire belonging to his lower qualities of nature. The fall comes about by the ascendancy of dormant desire which, again taking complete possession of the soul, leads

him to the enjoyment of the pure joys in heaven. After a period, he is born again either in a princely house of pure souls or into the family of yogis, of which the latter birth is very rare. In either of the new births he brings the Swabhava or tendencies of the previous one and, urged on by them, he endeavours to reach perfection which he failed to attain in his previous life. So the yogi realizes the supreme goal through perseverance of effort made through many births.

The yogi who has combined knowledge with action is greater than the hermit who renounces the world, he is greater than the man of wisdom, he is greater than the man who is involved in action, however great and vast be the significance of such action. Therefore the aspirant or the disciple Arjuna is asked to become a yogi. Next a still loftier state is shown—a state higher even than the highest and that is, having reached the perfection of yoga, the yogi loves and adores the supreme Lord of his heart as the Master and controller of the universe, as a devotee of the Lord. Here the state of peace, equanimity and bliss attained is absolute and perfect.

At this juncture the idea of the ultimate Reality as the supreme Godhead, who is the one cause of both the manifest and unmanifest existences, is developed, and it is held, realizing oneness with the Atman, i.e. the static aspect of the Lord, the yogi should still be His lover and devotee—this is the highest life.

CHAPTER VII

KNOWLEDGE OF THE LOWER AND HIGHER PRAKRITI

IN the previous chapters Sri Krishna, gradually bringing up the lower conceptions of the soul to the highest climax in the realization of the Atman, proceeds to bring still further out in its fulness the ideal of the supreme Godhead who is the Master and Lord of all the forces that work in the outer and inner worlds. He declares that yoga becomes easy when you strive for it by taking complete refuge in the supreme Reality. From this it is clear that realization of the Atman is not everything. A full knowledge and attainment of God in His all-inclusive and all-comprehensive totality is the goal. When the yogi, who has scaled the lower heights, reaches the utmost summit of this supreme, immanent and transcendent God, he has nothing higher to aspire for and nothing more to be known.

This grand yoga is not easy to obtain. Among thousands of people there would be hardly one who would strive for this yoga and, of these rare ones who have successfully fought through the barriers, there would be scarcely

one who would know the Lord in all His fullness, magnificence and glory. Here Sri Krishna presents to the aspiring vision of the Sadhaka an ideal which is at once personal and impersonal. Gita clearly declares that to know God only as either one of these is to know Him imperfectly. Sri Krishna, the Avatar, represents the complete Godhead and this Godhead is the king reigning in the hearts of all beings and creatures. As such He is the guru, friend, master, mother and guide of the devotee or disciple who longs for Him and is struggling to reach Him.

Sri Krishna has so far made clear the motionless, all-pervading, infinite aspect of His. Now He proceeds to deal in detail about His manifestation as the visible and invisible worlds. He speaks of the manifestation as Prakriti having two aspects, one the higher and the other lower. The lower aspect is made up of the five elements and mind, intellect and ego—called the eightfold Prakriti. The other, the superior aspect is Para Prakriti or the divine Vital Power pervading throughout all manifestations as the one principle which causes all changes and movements in the universe. This Prakriti is the seed cause of all beings and existences from whom all the universes are born and by whom they are upheld. By the same Power which brought into being this multifarious manifestation, the Lord declares, He withdraws them again into His being bringing about the universal dissolution.

The Lord says that nothing whatever exists except Himself and that He creates and animates all things which are strung on Him like pearls on a thread.

Now the Lord enumerates His divine powers markedly manifest in the various grosser and subtler elements making up His cosmic manifestation. He and His power though apparently separate are in reality one and the same. The peculiarly significant attributes of the inner and outer aspects of Prakriti are here given. The Lord says that He is the taste in water, the splendour of the moon and the sun, the Omkar in the Vedas, sound in ether, the heroic spirit in men, the perfume of the earth, light in the fire, the vital principle in all creatures and the power of austerity in the Tapaswi. He is the immortal seed from whom all beings and creatures have sprung. He is the reason of the intelligent. He is the lustre of the lustrous things. He is the divine energy in the strong, bereft of lust and passion, and He is the desire of those who walk on the path of righteousness.

Next the Lord explains the way how the soul is entangled in ignorance forgetting his real divine nature. Prakriti or the visible manifestation is made up of three Gunas—Sattwa, Rajas and Tamas. Although the Gunas have emanated from the Lord, He, both as divine energy and the actionless Atman, is not involved in or affected by these three modes of the lower Prakriti. So He is not abiding in them although they exist in His

all-comprehensive being. The soul obsessed by these Gunas loses the consciousness of his supreme Godly existence and fails to realize and know God as beyond the Gunas and as the indestructible Reality. The spell of delusive ignorance cast upon the soul by the Gunas is extremely difficult to expel, but it is assured that those who take complete refuge in the Lord cause the total destruction of this illusion. Whereas those who are self-centred and ever engaged in selfish deeds, doing harm to others and living a debased life, having their knowledge overcome by ignorance, become of the nature of Asuras.

In the present chapter the Lord has brought the Sadhaka up through various sadhanas for the control of the mind and the senses to a state of self-lessness. He taught how through right Karma and right thought an aspirant can effectively destroy the ego, desires and attachment, and thus gain the supreme wisdom through the realization of the Atman. But this is not all. Perfection is attained when Nishkama Karma and divine knowledge are united with devotion. The devotion that comes after Self-realization is of the highest type in which the yogi is one with God in all his aspects so much so that he becomes a veritable incarnation of God Himself. There are also inferior modes of devotion to God prevalent in the world. There are some who adore and pray to God to relieve them from sorrows relating to physical and mundane things. Then, there are others who worship God for obtaining divine knowledge and, again, others who approach

God for things material and sense enjoyments. The foremost class are those, who having attained the Atman, still adore the Lord with pure devotion. Since all the devotees, though belonging to different ideals of aspirations, hold constant communion with God for one thing or another, they are classed among the righteous. Still what type of devotee is most dear to the Lord? Surely he who has found peace and bliss of the Atman, ever calm and contented within, seeing and adoring the Lord as the one supreme in all existences, is the highest. The bond of love between this devotee and the Lord is mutual and indissoluble. In fact, the devotee and God are one in reality, the devotee is himself God, because, having realized his oneness with the Lord as the Atman, the devotee is ever united with the all-comprehensive Reality. This supreme devotion goes by the name of Para-Bhakti and this state is held out as the highest achievement. The vision of the devotee who has reached this supreme state is universal, i.e. he sees the Lord manifest as all beings, creatures and things in the universe. As this magnificent vision is of the loftiest pitch and peak of God-realization, it is a rare achievement. Hence the great soul, who declares that the Lord is all and everything, is very hard to behold.

The devotees of the lower order, whose knowledge is clouded by desires and who perform external spiritual rites pertaining to their Swabhava, to the lower gods, for the enjoyment of their earth-born longings, ultimately ascend to the world of these gods. Since the supreme God-

head is the master of all the worlds and the source from whom all things proceed, He grants the wishes of these covetous devotees and awards them the boons prayed for through these gods, thus rendering their faith firm and unshakable.

The Lord shows clearly the distinction between the devotee who works and worships with a desire for the fruit and the devotee who loves and adores God for His own sake. While the former possessing a darkened intellect worships the gods and attains the world of gods, the devotee who loves the Lord with desireless adoration goes directly to Him.

For the ordinary mind it is not easy to believe in or perceive an imperishable and transcendent existence behind the manifestation, because it is unillumined—being dulled by ignorance. Such a mind takes the manifestation alone as everything without knowing that the Lord in His supreme nature is unmanifest and eternal. The Lord is hidden behind the multitudinous manifestations, which He has brought into being through His divine creative energy, and, hence, the world under delusion cannot recognise Him who is without beginning, is ever existent and infinite. The Lord, being seated in the hearts of all creatures and the all-pervading witness of the universal manifestation, and being beyond the limitations of time and space, knows the beings who existed in the past, who are living in the present and who are yet to be born in the future.

While the Lord is the very sun of all knowledge, none of His creatures know Him.

Here Sri Krishna traces the immediate cause of this delusion. So long as the soul sees only diversity without the basic unity of all things and forms about him, he is subject to attraction for and repulsion to the forms as a result of the dual vision and falls a prey to the passing experiences of pleasure and pain and the allied pairs of opposites.

The preparation necessary for the soul for ridding himself of the ignorance, which has produced the pairs of opposites, is purity in action which alone destroys sin and enables him to be a staunch devotee of God. The pure actions here mentioned signify actions done, without expectation of reward, out of pure compassion, kindness and mercy, for the welfare of the world. Thus Nishkama Karma counteracts and nullifies the evil results of the soul's past desire-born actions and, at the same time, brings about freedom and expansion of his vision.

The aspirant, who has gone through the previous stages of spiritual evolution, has now reached a step when he could, through utter devotion to the supreme Lord of his being and world existence, attain the highest God-vision which is universal vision. In this supreme devotion the devotee, taking complete refuge in the Almighty Lord, is liberated from the cycle of birth and death, and his life on earth is filled with the

vision of the eternal and divine knowledge—expressing itself in divine action.

Again such a blessed devotee, who has possessed the complete vision of God—which is the basis for his knowledge, of the universe and all creatures and beings in it so formed out of the elements, of the existence of the Devas and their worlds, and of the works performed in dedication to the Lord—remains in a state of perfect calmness and peace, and even when he is dropping the body he does so in the full consciousness of God.

Whilst the earlier chapters deal with the problem of elimination of the ego, desire and attachment with the dawning of the knowledge of the Atman, at the closing of this chapter the Lord's teachings combine knowledge with devotion in order to show that, by their combination, action becomes pure, spontaneous and blissful. Here the difference which is so far seen between the manifest and the unmanifest, both aspects apparently contradictory, is resolved into one transcendent being of God in whom the manifest and the unmanifest are seen as one without any distinction.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SUPREME AND ETERNAL GODHEAD

THE present chapter seeks to elucidate the true significance of the terms employed in explaining the comprehensive knowledge which the devotee attains.

The Eternal is the Brahman, the indestructible spirit who, by His very nature being self-illumined, is ever awakened and all-knowing. Through the power proceeding from this supreme knowledge are born all beings by universal movement in the consciousness of the exalted Godhead. Karma starts from this first uprising wave of movement.

From this primeval source of Karma evolve out all the manifestations of Prakriti, the divine energy producing all changes and movements within it. Here each individual body is to be taken as the very expression of the complete Divinity, who is its root and basis. A man, who at the time of his shuffling off the mortal coil meditates on God as the all-inclusive and the greatest reality, merges into His existence.

Once again, the Lord declares that an aspirant's attainment is measured by the ideal which he has set before himself to reach. At the dissolution of the body, if he contemplates upon any lesser ideal than the supreme Lord, he goes to that life and world where that ideal is achieved. It is obvious each one adores an ideal according to his nature, but the greatest is he who strives to attain the Lord alone than whom there is no higher ideal. So he, who at the time of death thinks on the Lord, verily goes to Him.

All ideals are good—comparatively good—but if one would have an ideal which is absolutely good, it is God. In fact before the superlative glory of this ideal all other ideals pale into insignificance. So the Lord seated in the hearts of all beings advises the striving soul to keep before him the highest ideal, i.e. Himself. Hence the injunction is that, with intellect awakened and the mind concentrated on the Lord, to live for Him alone is the greatest way to live life and do all actions. Such a one is assured of the complete realization of God.

Now the Lord offers useful hints for fixing the thought in the meditation of God. As the mind wanders away from the central thought of meditation the Sadhaka by persevering effort should practise steady meditation. God is only for him who strives to reach Him with persistent and dauntless endeavour. In meditation let the aspirant think upon God as beginningless,

all-knowing, all-controlling, subtler than the subtlest, the support of all the worlds, whose form is beyond imagination, who is eternally effulgent like the sun, and unknown to darkness. Meditation thus performed with an unperturbed mind and fixed with the one supreme longing strengthened by the power of the divine energy within him, his life-breaths drawn upwards at a point between the eyebrows, causes the individual sense of the soul to absorb into the divine essence.

Then Sri Krishna proceeds to dilate upon another process of meditation for the aspirant, who observes the vow of Brahmacharya with the object of controlling and destroying the passions of the heart, so that he may be free to enter into the imperishable Truth, which was known to and handed down by the ancient knowers of this divine knowledge. In the state of this meditation the Sadhaka withdraws through all the organs of senses, the out-going energy—and unitedly concentrates its powers —by the aid of drawing up the vitality of life-breath and fixing it at the highest point of the head—and uttering the one syllable "OM", he gets absorbed on leaving the body in the transcendent divine Reality.

Om is the original first wave of sound that started from the bosom of the infinite, silent, motionless and attributeless Brahman. This primeval principle of manifestation connotes

three aspects of existence—creation, preservation and destruction which are represented by the three letters A—U—M which when attuned together produce the single vibration of sound Om. So, it is rightly held that Om is the root principle from which all the manifested worlds are born, in which continue to exist and by which are ultimately destroyed. In these apparently different triple movements there is one divine active principle—Shakti who is in reality the supreme Mother of the universe. Therefore all the varied manifestations, consisting of the multitudinous forms of beings, things and creatures and all the countless forces that work and play in them, have their inception in the Brahman from whom they project and evolve and lastly into whom they dissolve. The full knowledge of God and the universe and the individual soul is obtained only when the soul directs with single-pointed effort, all his mental and vital energies to this root principle—the Mula-shakti through whom the soul is blessed with the vision of the Brahman and realizes that the Brahman, the universe, and the Jiva are all one—both as manifest and unmanifest. Hence when a man, at the time of the dissolution of the body, meditates upon the full and all-inclusive being of the Lord and repeats this one syllable Om, he would straightaway be merged into the being of the Lord.

Meditation becomes easy when all the desires relating to the perishable are abandoned by means of an intense desire to realize God.

This longing makes him continuously think of and remember Him, which practice, bringing equality and peace in the mind, directly leads him to the supreme Godhead.

The great souls that have thus realized their identity with the supreme Godhead are not born again in the world to experience pain and sorrow pertaining to the transient objects and things. They enjoy a bliss which is incomparable and of the loftiest kind. Even Brahma, the agent of Shakti as the presiding deity over creation, Vishnu, the Lord of preservation and protection, and Shiva, the supreme power for destruction, have a beginning and they have an end at the time of the final deluge and dissolution. But for him who has reached the Lord, who is the first cause of the causes, who is Himself causeless, there is no death and destruction.

Man is, in his state of ignorance, bound by the triple cords of time, space and causation. These three states exist only in relation to the ever changing and transient natural phenomena of life and manifestation. The true life lies beyond these states. To take the mind off the count of time, the seeker is told to understand the duration of day and night in the life of the creator Brahma. One day of Brahma is equal to one thousand Yugas of human calculation and the same number of ages for one night of his. To know this is to dissolve our limited knowledge of day and night into the vastness of Brahma's calculation. To liberate the mind entirely from the tyranny of time, the soul is similarly made

to perceive that at the rise of Brahma's day the manifested worlds project forth from the unmanifest absolute and at the approach of night the worlds disappear again into the absolute. The countless beings that are born go repeatedly back into the absolute Truth at the time of dissolution and come forth again at the time of creation.

The thought is then flung still higher into an existence higher than the unmanifest—a great, eternal absolute—still deeper than the depthless deep, which is not destroyed when all else meet with annihilation. This great unmanifest is the dwelling place of the Lord. Those who reach this indestructible state do not return again to the life of misery and pain.

Here again, Sri Krishna speaks about His all-transcendent personality in whom exist the eternal manifest and unmanifest. This divine personality is the Supreme God to whom the devotee should offer adoration and worship. The perfect devotee who has surrendered his all at the feet of this Almighty Lord, in whom the entire universe lives, moves and has its being and by whom it is pervaded, reaches a status free from all conditioned changes of birth and death. In other words, he who has attained and entered into the being of the Lord never returns to the world of birth and death.

The yogis, who strive to obtain this highly blessed and exalted state, have discovered the particular external time and circumstance during which they could drop off the body and attain

the immortal state. The time and the circumstance are determined by light, which is available when the fire is lit, when the sun shines during the day and the six months of the year, when the sun ascends in the northern direction. However, the condition for his supreme attainment depends upon the illumination of the soul within and the splendour of light without. Those who give up the body during the dark period of night, dimness and southern course of the sun, not attaining the Eternal, return to the world of birth and death.

This is so far as the yogis who strive for liberation at the end of the earthly life are concerned. But the devotee, who having attained the knowledge of the Divine, lives entirely in the being of God, eternally dwells in Him in all conditions, and at all times. For him there are no restrictions left which could obstruct or mar the highest state of perfect freedom and bliss which he enjoys even whilst he lives in the body and is active in the life of the world. For him the northern and the southern paths have no significance.

The yogi who seeks the beginningless height of God-realization rejects every kind of fruit resulting from his sacrifices and austerities, and becoming steadfastly fixed in union with God directly enters into His existence. Arjuna is asked by the Lord to fight on the battle-field in this state of perfect yoga without fear of death and without harbouring any perplexing thoughts.

CHAPTER IX

THE ULTIMATE KNOWLEDGE AND SECRET

THE ninth chapter deals with devotion based upon knowledge. Knowledge by itself is not the highest goal. But devotion and love combined with knowledge takes the soul to the highest perfection and consummation of life. Now devotion enables the enlightened soul to go up straight and easily to the seat of immortality. Here the Lord distinctly says that there is no perfect liberation for the soul if he does not become the Bhakta of the Lord. Without knowing this people come down again to the world of change and destruction.

Now the Lord describes the all-comprehensive personality of His. As the invisible and unmanifest spirit He pervades all the worlds. Being the first Great Cause, all things have emanated from Him. The universal manifestations evolve out of Him. So His manifestations are not His entire existence. He dwells in them but, at the same time, He is not in them in entirety. He is the sustainer and support of all beings whom He bears on His infinite bosom, nourishing and protecting them. He is the supreme Master over

them. He controls and guides all their activities and, still, He is apart from them, and not rooted in them, since He is the ever free, eternal and infinite Reality. As air dwells in the vast expanse of the sky without affecting the ether, so all creatures have their existence in the being of God. These innumerable creatures issue forth at the period of creation from the transcendent personality of the Godhead and, at the time of dissolution, enter into Him only to be emanated again and be involved in the Lord's lower nature or Prakriti. These ignorant souls are born again and again by the urge of Prakriti, being still captured helplessly in Her invisible, illusive power. In spite of these ever recurring cycles of manifestations, change and destruction, which proceed from the Lord, He ever remains free from the bondage of action. He, as the witness and as Lord and controller, induces Prakriti by His power to create the moving and the non-moving worlds and causes all things to revolve according to His supreme will.

The God-realized man is God Himself in human form. Ignorant souls cannot recognise the divinity in man in whom the universal spirit is realized and attained. Now, who are the ignorant ones and why are they ignorant? The ignorant soul is he who, completely subject to Tamoguna, possesses a cruel, tyrannical and bloodthirsty nature. Although apparently they look like human beings, being under the influence of ignorance, they are bereft of pure thinking and noble qualities and are given to utterly selfish actions

which bring misery and pain to others. They are ever the enemies of people who are of the divine nature, pious and pure in deeds. He is a saint who possesses the character illumined with faith and devotion to the Lord, whom he adores in his heart as the eternal cause of all worlds and the beings in them.

Next the Lord proceeds to depict the gradual ascent of the soul along the path of devotion to the supreme seat of the Lord. Since his object of concentrated adoration and love is the Lord, he will be ever engaged in singing and recounting the magnificent glories of the Lord. Feeling the presence of the Lord within his own heart he surrenders himself completely to Him through the observance of vows, so that his mind may not be externalised. Thus, ever contemplating upon the Lord and offering perfect allegiance and love to Him, the devotee enjoys calmness and contentment. Then the devotee transcending even the sphere of knowledge, loves and worships the Lord in all the visible manifestations, beholding Him as pervading everywhere. In this vision of God he sees the one great unmanifest in the variety of forms appearing before him. In this supreme state the devotee is free from all the bonds, restrictions, observances and performance of rituals and external forms of worship and Sadhana by a total dedication to Him of all his physical and mental activities. Now the Lord becomes the all-in-all for the devotee. He looks upon Him as the originator, protector, feeder and the ancient cause

of the universe and He is known by him as pure Truth, as the supreme One signified by the all-powerful sound Om and as the highest Godhead spoken of in the Vedas. The devotee, renouncing attachment to the perishable forms to whom he was clinging through various ways of relationship, now directs all the powers of his thought and attraction to the Lord whom he adores as the goal, the supporter, the master, the unaffected observer, the perfect refuge, the beloved, the beginning and the end of all things, the very abode of wealth and prosperity, the basis of all creation and the immortal root of the universe. He further clearly understands that at the will of the Lord all changes in the elemental movement in the world are taking place, that He is the giver of immortality as well as death, that at His bidding heat is produced and the rains fall, that He is both the manifest and the unmanifest, the seen and the unseen, the changing and the unchanging, the moving and the unmoving and also that He is the one transcending these Dwandwas.

At this juncture the Lord speaks of a lower form of devotion which leads the devotee to the heavenly world for the enjoyment of the pleasures which that world yields. These devotees perform austerities with the sole object of obtaining heavenly joys. They in the company of spiritual beings, partake of divine entertainments. After a period, when they have spent out in heaven the good they accumulated as a result of pious deeds performed in accordance with the

dictates of Vedas, they come down again to the earthly sphere of birth and death. Bound by the fetters of desire, these devotees aim at and get the impermanent and perishable.

But the wise devotee is he who, abandoning all desires. seeks to reach the Lord alone and with that end in view ever remains blissful in ceaseless contemplation of the Lord without allowing any other thought to disturb him. He looks upon the Lord as the one supreme ideal and goal of life and he exists for none or nothing else. He offers up every part of his being and every activity of his life as worship to the Lord. Now the great impersonal personality of God becomes the dearest object of the devotee's life and thus he entitles himself to the full protection of the Lord. The Lord declares with the words of unmistakable assurance that he bears the entire responsibilities of such a devotee and takes care of him in every way and manner.

The other devotees, who adore the Lord with the object of gaining the pleasures of the other world, unconsciously worship the supreme Lord Himself, though they render sacrifices to the lesser gods. Without knowing this truth, they rise up half way to the world of gods and fall down again to the world of mortality. Because those who worship these lesser ideals representing the presiding deities over the elements go to them. Those who fix their goal into the being of the Lord Himself—the great Master of all deities and elements and worlds—attain the ineffa-

ble state of immortality, freedom and bliss. The Lord, who is seated in the hearts of all creatures and things of the universe, now goes on to describe the sweetness and glory of Love. Love does not demand good, fine and great things. Divine love accepts with joy whatever little or insignificant thing that is offered to it. What is essentially required is the spirit in which the thing is offered. Even the offer of a leaf, water, fruit or flower mingled with the pure spirit of love makes the Lord within the heart to reveal Himself and fill the devotee with pure ecstasy. How much more will be the joy of the devotee if he would do all actions in the name and for the sake of the Lord! So let the devotee, in order to make his life a perennial stream of bliss, perform all his usual daily acts as eating, giving, sacrificing and his spiritual practices as an offering to the Lord. By such a total surrender of all his actions to the divine Power the devotee is freed from the bondage of Karma and rises above the notions of good and evil with regard to the result of his actions. Renouncing the idea, "I am the doer", he merges himself through utter freedom from attachment to external objects and actions into the all-inclusive existence of the supreme Godhead. The Godhead from the seat of His transcendent glory looks upon all beings with an equal vision in which there is none for Him to love or hate. The devotee who has realized his union with the Lord through a consecrated life of love and service to Him ever dwells in the Lord and the Lord ever dwells in him.

What about those who are living a life of sin doing deeds actuated by selfish desire, having fallen a prey to the lowest Guna of Prakriti? Have these no hope? Are they lost for ever? Here the Lord assures Arjuna that even such a soul, by a radical change in the vision and outlook of life, by a turn of the mind and all activities towards the attainment of God, becomes pure and righteous and, ultimately liberating himself from the clutches of Moha, attains immortal peace and bliss. Again the Lord gives the supreme word full of His grace that His devotee would never fall and be destroyed. In the extreme moments and trials of life even the father and the mother would fail a man but the all compassionate and ever merciful Lord of the worlds never, under any circumstances, abandon His devotees. Truly, if there is one, in whom a man can place complete trust and in whom he can take perfect refuge, it is God.

A misconception had arisen in the minds of men as to the fitness of a soul for the realization of God, and it had been held that people born of sin, women, Vaishyas and Shudras, because of their birth, have no hope of salvation. This extremely harmful, unjust and erroneous notion has been brushed away by the divine assurance that even these souls can reach the highest state the moment they seek the shelter of the Lord. As regards the pure souls who walk in the path of righteousness, though blessed with worldly greatness and wealth, they, renouncing attach-

ment to these transitory things, more easily reach the Lord by means of entire self-dedication.

So the great injunction yielding inexpressible solace and encouragement goes forth to the effect: "Through constant remembrance let the devotee, whatever he be, concentrate his mind on Me, hold Me as the dearest object of his life, surrender himself entirely to My will and, thus attaining the vision of the Atman, realize Me—the great Beloved in his own heart."

CHAPTER X

THE POWER OF SUZERAINTY

THE tenth chapter begins with the idea of the highest supremacy and sovereignty of the Lord over all the lesser gods and Rishis. Even these highly evolved souls cannot comprehend the mysterious way by which the Lord projects Himself out as the universe and all its creatures and things. Because the Lord is the infinite originator of even the gods and Rishis.

Here the Lord enumerates the various natures dominating the beings whom He has evolved out of Himself. The quality of pure reason, right knowledge, illumined wisdom, forgiveness, rectitude, self-control, tranquillity, joy, pain, worldliness and unworldliness, fear and courage; and also non-violence, harmony, contentment, piety, charity, honour and dishonour are the different kinds of nature in which all creatures appear in the world according to their respective Karma originated from the Lord.

The Lord's Daivi Prakriti or the creative Shakti first brought into existence the seven great Rishis who are the progenitors of mankind and the four Kumaras or protectors of the earth and the Manus who enacted the laws of Dharma for

the guidance and uplift of humanity. Hence the yogi should take the Lord as the highest Supreme, beyond all earthly and heavenly powers, and being steadfastly united with Him, attain bliss and calmness of the Eternal. The devotee thus enthroned in yogà clearly perceives that the Lord is the first Parent of all existences from whom everything is born, and thus understanding Him adores Him in contemplation and enjoys the ineffable ecstasy of union.

The devotee, as he proceeds on the path of yoga, absorbs himself in the thought of God to such a degree that his entire life becomes illumined with the one consciousness of the Divine. He takes joy in meditating upon the Beloved and experiences delight in only talking about Him and His greatness. Thus united with the Lord through selfless adoration and love, the devotee attaining perfect calmness becomes absorbed in the universal consciousness of God. The devotee who, seeking the knowledge of the Atman, has dedicated himself to the Lord receives divine grace and his ignorance is dispelled by the light of pure knowledge.

The Lord has in the foregoing Slokas shown that through utter devotion a soul realizes the supreme Godhead, i.e. He reveals Himself in the devotee in all His greatness and glory. Such a devotee is the very incarnation of God. He the unborn, the original God, the one great abode of all that exists, who is the one eternal pure Reality, assumes human form with all the powers of

the Divine. The disciple accepts this grand truth. The great sages such as Narada, Asita, Devala and Vyasa—the devotees of the highest excellence and attainment—with words of inspiration extol Him as the supreme Lord manifest as man. Now the question arises about the Lord's all-pervading nature in the visible manifestations. The knowledge of this aspect of the Lord is not known even to Devas, i.e. those who have developed the high quality of Sattwa-guna, neither is it known to those who possess a mixture of Sattwa and Rajas.

The complete comprehension of God is possible only by a perfect realization of Him as the supreme Purushottama. Here the knowledge and the knower are known to be one—the object and the subject being one, the Lord alone can see Himself and can know Himself. Purushottama is the root principle of all existences, master of all creatures, God of all gods, the one great controller of the universe. He is at once the visible worlds with their multitudinous forms and varied changes and activities therein and also the motionless, all-pervading, invisible and changeless Atman and at the same time still beyond these aspects.

Arjuna accepts the descent of the Divine in human form but desires to know His great attributes as the omnipresent Truth. Arjuna insists upon knowing the method of meditation by which the Lord can be realized as the all-pervading Reality and further about the aspects in which the

Lord has to be thought and meditated upon. After hearing so far the most elevating discourse of Sri Krishna, Arjuna craves for a more comprehensive teaching regarding the perfect yoga held forth by Him.

The Lord, after asserting that He, as the all-pervading Atman, is residing in the bosom of all creatures and that He is the beginning, middle and end of all these creatures, proceeds to describe His glories particularly manifest in the most prominent objects and beings of His creation who contribute to the harmonious working of His universal Lila.

He describes the various cosmic powers by which He makes Himself manifest in His divine and spiritual forms controlling the manifold forces of the universe. In every group of spiritual forms belonging to different planes or worlds He is seen more significantly in the heads of these groups. For the ordinary mind divine Power is perceived in the extraordinary manifestations of the Lord, e.g. amongst the objects that cause illumination the greatness of the Sun is unsurpassed or among the mountains the Meru stands unique or amongst the motionless objects Himalayas is most predominant. However, the Lord goes to show that wherever there is magnificence and greatness there He is more clearly beheld than in other places. In brief, He is the supreme Almighty Power that rules all the varied worlds and gods that preside over the innumerable forces that work in the universe. He is the Creator,

Protector and Destroyer of the worlds. He is the primeval seed from which all creation has come into existence. There is nothing that exists which is not born of His power. In truth, there is no limit to His powers and what could be expressed of Him is nothing compared to His infinite glories. Whatever is mighty, splendid and glorious is only a spark of His infinite grandeur. Lastly, the Lord concludes that verily the entire universe is formed and pervaded by one fragment of His unthinkably vast and limitless existence. Thus the mind is flung from the particular and significant things into the eternal and all-inclusive being of the Lord. This presentation of universal view of God prepares the aspirant for the dazzling vision of the Lord which is the theme of the ensuing chapter.

CHAPTER XI

THE VISION—UNIVERSAL

NOW the mind of Arjuna is fully illumined with the knowledge of the Atman and prepared for the world vision. Hence, Arjuna prays to the supreme Lord of the universe to grant him the vision of the Lord as the omnipotent cosmic spirit. The vision that is demanded is of the highest import and sublimity. For this supreme vision the Lord, through His infinite grace, endows Arjuna with the divine sight. The description that follows this vision relates to all creatures, beings, gods, things, objects and existences in the entire universe. For Arjuna now, the whole manifestation stands transformed as one gigantic body of the Lord. He beholds everywhere and in everything the Lord Himself manifest. Every form appears as an emanation from Him, the divine source of all forms. The one Lord is seen revealed as the multitudinous creatures and things in the universe. By a clear perception, the one divine Energy is observed having taken shapes and causing all movements and changes therein. One eternal life principle has brought forth the countless lives. In the infinite unmanifest, the worlds and their creatures appear and dissolve—having a period of evolution and a period of dissolution.

He beholds all creatures and beings driven to perform varied activities by the irresistible power of the Lord. The Lord is seen moving the cosmic wheel of His omnipotent energy for bringing about momentous changes in the life of the worlds. All the gods of the different spheres and all the forms of power that work for good or evil are subject to the supreme will of the Lord. The vision of Arjuna becomes so pure and comprehensive that in his sight all forms are seen as the forms of the Lord, all heads as His heads, all eyes as His eyes, every part of every body as the member of the Lord's divine form. Wherever he looks, up or below, right or left, in front or at back, he sees nothing but the Lord.

So far, the Lord leads the earnest aspirant from the earlier steps of Sadhana for the purification of the mind culminating in the knowledge of the Atman towards the highest devotion and grants him the most exalted vision of the Lord as the countless manifestations in the universe. Work, knowledge and devotion mingling together produces this grand universal vision. In this vision the devotee experiences a joy and an ecstasy which is incomparable and inexpressible. He loses himself in the supernal existence so much so that he beholds at once God both as manifest and unmanifest. His individuality, due to the identification with the body, disappears and by a sudden transformation, the worlds stand revealed to him as the very form and expression of the Lord. Now the devotee is no longer as such different from his most beloved Lord but

becomes one with Him in entirety and in all His aspects. This sudden transcendence brings about an almost shocking experience to the devotee who had so far loved and adored the Lord in His personal aspect of an Avatar. So the new experience frightens him—the new vision dazes and dazzles him. The resultant outcome of the ineffable rapture and joy becomes too vast and too irresistible to be contained and held by him. The floods of that bliss absorb him. The devotee does not wish to remain in this lofty consciousness for long; because the helplessness of his state in that vision and the losing of a beautiful and sublime ideal loved and worshipped as a divine personality urges him to dwell again in the consciousness of a devotee by the assumption of a separate and immortal status of a spiritual entity of a servant, child or any other near and dear relation of his beloved Lord. In this supreme condition the devotee feeling and realizing his utter oneness with the Lord still plays at being different from Him. Now commences the true Karmayoga. The devotee, who has thus reached the highest step of God-realization, works in the world as God Himself for Loka-Sangraha or welfare of humanity.

After granting the universal vision to Arjuna the Lord says that such a vision is the hardest thing to attain. The supreme devotion that ought to follow Self-realization does not come to those who worship the Lord and reach Him in His formless and eternal aspect. Therefore the Lord declares that only a single-minded devotee is en-

titled to this divine vision. This great vision can never be obtained by reading the scriptures, nor by rigorous Sadhana, nor by philanthropic acts, nor by sacrifices. Pure devotion alone makes the yogi attain Him through knowledge and then merge himself into Him as the comprehensive and all-inclusive Godhead.

Again, the necessary purification through actions done for the sake of the Lord, freedom from attachment and hatred towards anybody or thing are pointed out as essential for approaching the Lord and being blessed with the supreme vision.

CHAPTER XII

THE PATH OF DEVOTION

THE present chapter goes to prove that the path of devotion is easier than the path of pure knowledge. The path of devotion means the adoration of God in His supreme personality in which the aspirant forms a near and dear relationship with the supreme Lord and, through constant remembrance of Him, and with prayers and singing and speaking of His glories, rises himself to the divine consciousness. Through this devotion the devotee effects his union with and absorption in the Lord, and thus not only attains the knowledge of the Atman or the Nirguna aspect of God, but also gets the highest vision of God manifested as the universe. The peace and joy which a devotee experiences is maintained in all conditions of life and activity. The devotee becomes totally divine, both internally and externally, i.e. in the knowledge of the Atman and in all the actions of Prakriti. The path of knowledge leads the aspirant only to the knowledge of the Atman and that, through a rigorous discipline for the subdual of all the passions and desires of the heart and mind. Of course, the aspirant realizes the indestructible, the infinite and eternal Truth, but he misses the supreme

ecstasy of action. The path is therefore, not only difficult, because to subdue the mind and senses by severe austerities is a hard thing, but also it does not take the soul to the supreme personality of God who is at once the impersonal and formless Purusha and the manifest Prakriti. This supreme Person is the Purushottama of the Gita.

Whilst for him who is the worshipper of the unmanifest Truth the bliss resulting from all the spontaneous activities of life is not possible, the devotee, dedicating all his actions to the Lord and ever united with Him through remembrance and meditation, lives eternally in the Godhead in both His aspects. The devotee who throws himself completely on the mercy of the Lord and hands himself over in every part of his being is lifted and elevated by the Lord from the mortal plane to the transcendent status of immortality.

How is one to practise this devotion? The Lord says "Concentrate your mind on Me. Let all your thoughts and faculties be stilled and merged into Me and undoubtedly you will ever dwell in Me. If your mind wanders from My meditation, through continuous practice of remembrance fix it on Me. In case your practice is not sufficient to control the restless nature of the mind, have recourse to My service, i.e. do all your actions for My sake and thus attain Me. If you think that you are incapable of carrying out the above injunctions, there is still the easiest and the best way to reach Me, and that is, to take complete refuge in Me, to make Me your aim and

goal of life, and to abandon the desire for the fruit of all your actions."

"The way of discrimination by which you free yourself from attachment to the unreal and transient, and identify yourself with the real and infinite, is superior to the path of hard and mortifying practices for the subdual of the mind and the senses. Better than the path of discrimination is the method of meditation through which you disconnect your mind with the perishable and fix it in the imperishable. But still greater and the greatest and, at the same time, the easiest means is utter self-dedication in which the desire for reward of actions is absolutely renounced. The last path is the path of pure devotion and self-surrender. When thus the devotee lives and acts in life without expectation of the fruit of his works, he attains perfect peace and joy."

Now the Lord gives the attributes and qualifications of the devotees who are dear to Him. The devotee has no dislike or hatred towards anybody and is compassionate and loving towards all; free from attachment to external forms; bereft of the ego sense; same in joy and pain and ever kind and forgiving. Through the control of desires and possessing equal vision, he is ever content and cheerful, because he has with a firm determination fixed his mind and intellect on the Lord in a spirit of perfect self-surrender.

The devotee has neither like nor dislike towards the world and so is not attached or repelled by it, and is thus free from the touches of

the transitory joys and the turmoil of the mind due to anxiety, wrath and fear. Being ever in tune with the blissful God, he has no desire left for anything and is ever filled with purity, dispassion, wisdom and tranquillity, which state he maintains by a total surrender of all his works to the Lord.

He has neither love nor hatred towards any creature, is unaffected by grief and bereft of desire, and with a whole-hearted devotion to the Lord he transcends the notions of good and evil. He is same to friend and enemy, fame and ill-fame, heat and cold, joy and grief, and ever remains unattached to the perishable.

The devotee keeps his equality intact in both praise and blame, and is thus always conscious of the silent Atman within, in whom he is perfectly satisfied, and so has no anxiety or fear of the future. He has no sense of possession and is devoted to the Lord with a concentrated and steady mind.

Those, who thus understanding the pure qualities of a devotee, cultivate them and are blessed with unshakable faith, and make the Lord their highest goal, are the most beloved of the Lord.

The above characteristics of pure devotion are attained by the devotee by means of his entire self-dedication, in which the ego-sense is only assumed for the sake of the joy which a devotee gets from a close communion with the beloved Lord of his heart by means of singing and con-

versing about Him and serving Him in all actions. His Beloved is not merely the immutable aspect of God's existence which is beyond and above all manifestations, but also the active, all-merciful Lord of the universe seated in the hearts of all beings and creatures. He sees God in all, he loves God in all and serves God in all. So all his life's activities in all fields of labour, for whomsoever they are done, are the adoration and service of the Lord. Hence he is ever merged in an infinite ocean of supreme and eternal joy. Verily, his life becomes a wave of endless ecstasy. He is free and blissful like a child.

CHAPTER XIII

FIELD AND KNOWER OF FIELD

IN this chapter are explained the distinctive qualities of Purusha or Atman and Prakriti or the manifestation, and also the knowledge of difference between these two aspects of existence. Sri Krishna has at various stages of his previous discourses spoken of these two aspects as having no similarity although they lose distinction in the ultimate Reality—Purushottama who is at once these aspects and beyond them. The Atman or Purusha is pure divine knowledge because He, as the silent, omniscient and all-pervading principle of existence, witnesses and, through the will of Purushottama, illumines and inspires Prakriti in all Her movements and activities. Arjuna now wishes to know in detail the basis of difference between Purusha and Prakriti and of the mutual relationship between them—Purusha as the knower of the field and Prakriti as the field.

Sri Krishna expounds that the body is the field and he who knows the body is the knower of the field, and this is in accordance with the teachings of the sages. The Lord is Himself the knower of the body, who dwells in all bodies. He who has possessed a knowledge of the field as body and the dweller within as the Lord has

attained real wisdom. Now the Lord describes succinctly the nature and modifications of the field and also the knower of the field and His infinite powers. The ancient hymns sung by the Rishis in various ways express the glory of this great Eternal.

The Prakriti is made up of the five basic elements, ego, intellect, the ten senses and the mind and also the five objects of sense and the unmanifest Shakti. Of the ten senses, five are of knowledge and five are of action. All these together make up the Kshetra or the field. The movements and changes that occur in this field are desire, hate, joy, grief, the combination of the body and the senses, intelligence and steadiness. The other qualities inherent in the nature and working of the field which go to constitute knowledge are meekness, frankness, kindness, forgiveness, honesty, service of the master, purity, self-determination and mind control; again, non-attachment for the objects of the senses, freedom from Ahankara, a clear discernment of the problems of pain, birth, death, old age and sickness. Added to these are also dispassion, i.e. non-identification of self with son, wife or house; and the well-poised mind in both favourable and unfavourable happenings.

In human nature there are two forces at work—one leading the soul towards God and the other towards ignorance. The one part of the qualities enumerated above relates to the downward force of Prakriti, and the other speaks of

the force of Prakriti taking the soul in the upward course. Now the devotee who is gifted with all the attributes for rising upwards towards God seeks, with unshakable devotion to the Lord, union with Him. He keeps before him God alone as the highest aim of life, giving up the desire for every other object in the world. Thus to keep his mind fixed on the great ideal he retires into solitude, abandoning the pleasures derived from the society of worldly men.

True knowledge consists in the soul's constant awareness of the Atman, at the same time possessing a clear idea of the supreme object of knowledge. Any conception or idea which is antagonistic to this supreme ideal belongs to utter ignorance.

Now the Lord discourses upon the highest and the all-transcendent eternal Reality who is at once existence and non-existence, knowing whom the soul enjoys the bliss and freedom of immortality. This ultimate Reality is everywhere manifest, in the phenomenal life in the world as hands, eyes, heads and mouths, permeating and pervading through all the beings and creatures. He informs, covers and resides in the things everywhere. He illumines all the senses, though independent of them, supports the whole creation, still unattached to it; is beyond the Gunas, still blissful in their movements. He dwells within and without all forms and beings, is motionless and at the same time moving; being subtle, He is beyond perception; is near and at the same time far off.

Although He is all-pervading and undivided, yet He is seated diversely in all beings and things and all creatures are supported by Him. He destroys and creates. He is that light of all lights in whom there is no darkness. He dwells in the hearts of all beings, being at once knowledge and the object of knowledge who is to be attained only by knowledge.

Thus in the foregoing teaching the Lord concisely describes about the field, knowledge and the goal of knowledge. The devotee understanding this truth merges into the being of the Lord.

From this stage of the teaching, Sri Krishna proceeds to explain the nature and qualities of the dual aspects of existence of the supreme Purusha or Purushottama—the complete and all-comprehensive being of the Godhead—one aspect of whom is Prakriti or matter and the other the Atman or Purusha both of which are eternal. The three Gunas and their varied combinations belong to Prakriti. From Prakriti are born causes and effects in regard to all the manifestations. The Atman or Purusha enjoys the experience of joy and grief. The Purusha residing in Prakriti acts through the Gunas of Prakriti. When the Purusha thus identifies Himself with the Gunas He assumes the individual sense and takes birth in pure or impure wombs. The Purushottama is the controller, sanctioner, upholder and enjoyer, being at the same time the Purusha or Atman dwelling in the bodies of all beings and creatures. The knowledge of this difference between Puru-

sha and Prakriti—Purusha as the unaffected witness and Prakriti as having the Gunas—frees the soul from the cycle of births and deaths.

So the individual soul, who is ignorant of the Atman or Purusha, has to regain the knowledge of the Atman and liberate himself from his identity with the body and the Gunas belonging to Prakriti. In other words, he must transcend the gunas of Prakriti into whose grip he has fallen and become deluded. Various paths according to the nature of the individual soul are adopted to attain the realization of the Atman. Some by mental adoration and meditation of the supreme Reality see the Atman in their own hearts, others realize the Atman through the use of the discriminative faculty that distinguishes Purusha from Prakriti and, again, others attain the Atman through a total dedication of all actions to the supreme Lord. Some who are ignorant of the above methods listen to the teachings regarding this great Truth and through constant remembrance and contemplation of them, destroying ignorance, reach immortality.

All creatures in the world are born, whatever they be, by the combination of Prakriti or field and Purusha, the knower of the field. Birth denotes the evolution of a creature due to the Purusha being involved in the Gunas of the Prakriti. The true vision of utter freedom and immortality comes when the Lord is seen residing equally in all creatures as the one imperishable Truth with in the perishable forms. In this vision

the Lord is seen as equally pervading through all existences and therefore as the one omnipresent Reality, and the soul who is blessed with this exalted experience walks the loftiest path. In this supreme state the soul beholds that it is Prakriti that is responsible for all activities and that the Atman is actionless.

Now this supreme Truth is reached with the full possession of the vision in which he sees clearly that one Reality is the root and basis of the diverse forms and existences in the universe and that these have projected from that one divine Source. The Atman dwelling in the body is without beginning and without Gunas and is indestructible; hence neither acts nor is acted upon. As the all-pervading Akasha or ether is untouched by the various changes of grosser bodies existing in it, being itself extremely subtle, so the Atman permeating and enveloping all life and form remains ever unattached in spite of the movements caused by Prakriti. Just as the one Sun gives light to the entire world, so the Master of Prakriti illumines the whole manifestation of Prakriti.

In the ignorant state of the soul, identity with the Body is the one cause that renders him oblivious to the knowledge of his Atman. He thinks the apparent world with all its forms and movements born of Prakriti is the only reality. His real, immortal nature is utterly forgotten. What keeps him down in ignorance are the Gunas in the web of which he is entangled. So the

knowledge relating to the difference between the Purusha, the immutable, eternal, actionless Atman and the ever-moving, changing and formative Prakriti is essential. This divine knowledge translated into experience and practice, i.e. lived through actual attainment, frees the soul completely from the clutches of Prakriti.

CHAPTER XIV

THE NATURE OF THE THREE GUNAS

In the fourteenth chapter the Lord further expounds in detail the highest knowledge by the attainment of which all the saints and sages have reached perfection. This knowledge causes the absorption of the soul so completely into the being of the Godhead that he assumes the exalted divine nature and is once for all liberated from the occasion of rebirth at the time of the manifestation of the universe, and does not undergo destruction at the time of the dissolution of the universe. From the womb of the Eternal all creatures and beings take birth and the supreme Purusha, as the father, is the generator. Wherever a mortal is born, in whatever womb, God's eternal existence is the real womb from which he is brought into being. This eternal aspect of God is the Mahashakti—the Mother of the universe who is the cause of creation, preservation and destruction. She is the Mula-Prakriti spoken of in the earlier discourses. This divine Prakriti or Adi-Maya possesses two aspects, the higher and the lower Prakriti. When the soul is entangled in the meshes of the lower Prakriti, he falls into ignorance and becomes subject to births and deaths. The lower Prakriti is made

up of the three Gunas which bind the soul to the sense of individuality or the ego and entangles him in Karma. To transcend the lower Prakriti and its Gunas, the way is to surrender oneself to the Mula-Prakriti or Vidya-Maya of the Lord. Here surrender means a consciousness that all actions are done by the sole power of Mula-Prakriti. It is then that the soul attains the supreme status of immortality by complete union and oneness with the all-comprehensive being of the Lord. Hence a knowledge of Gunas and their workings is essential before the soul could successfully strive to free himself from their clutches.

Equilibrium or poise of calmness is the nature of Sattwa-guna, movement or activity, the nature of Rajo-guna and inertia or inactivity, the nature of Tamo-guna. These Gunas overpowering the imperishable Atman in the body give rise to the body idea and the resultant ignorance and misery. Of the Gunas, Sattwa being pure and full of light and strength enables the soul to experience the joy born of the delights of an illumined intellect. Rajas having the nature of passion and activity makes the soul, through inordinate craving, long for objects of the senses and so gets attached to action. Now Tamo-guna—the offspring of ignorance—through its dark veil of delusion on the soul makes him dull, lazy and indifferent.

These Gunas work on human nature intermittently and by turns. When the Sattwa-guna

is predominant it rules keeping down the Rajo and Tamo-gunas. When Rajo-guna predominates Sattwa and Tama are subdued. In the same way when Tamo-guna is in the ascendant Sattwa and Rajas are over-powered. The Gunas, when they sway over the nature of the soul, reveal in him their distinctive characteristics.

When the Sattwic knowledge prevails in the soul, a light is seen emanating from all parts of the body of such a soul. The Rajasic man is made out from his restless and passionate nature, full of desires, ever active, utilizing his energies for the satisfaction of greed. The man of Tamo-guna carries with him a nature surcharged with darkness, torpor, indifference and attachment.

When the Sattwic qualities are predominant at the time of dissolution of the body, the soul ascends to the pure worlds of sages. Whilst Rajo-guna rules at the time of death he is born again in the environment of action propelled by desire or attachment. When the body is dissolved in a state of Tamo-guna he takes birth amongst the dull and the stupid.

The stainless peace of Sattwa-guna is attained as a fruit of meritorious actions. The result of Rajasic action is grief, and of Tamo-guna ignorance. Sattwa enlightens the intellect, Rajas creates insatiable desire, and Tamas causes delusion, torpor and ignorance. Those who have developed Sattwa-guna or the harmonious nature ascend upwards, those who live in Rajo-guna remain in the middle state of activity, and those

who are controlled by the Tamasic quality descend downwards and possess the most degrading character.

The man of wisdom who, understanding the nature of the Gunas, knows that the Atman is beyond the Gunas and that for all actions the Gunas are alone responsible, realizes his divine and immortal nature. Thus when the soul has transcended the three Gunas from which all bodies have sprung and of which they are composed, he attains liberation from birth, death, decay and grief and ever enjoys the bliss of the Eternal.

At this stage of the teaching of the Gunas, Arjuna interrupts and requests to be told the signs of the man who has risen beyond the three qualities; in what manner he lives and performs actions and by what means he crosses beyond the Gunas. In reply the Lord says, the soul, who has risen beyond the Gunas, has neither the feeling of attraction nor repulsion for the light of Sattwa or the motion of Rajas or the delusion of Tamas, whenever any one of them is apparent; and thus ever remains unaffected and unattached. He would be so steadfastly fixed in the witness-Atman who is impartially and dispassionately looking on the play of the Gunas, that he would say "I am the immutable and the motionless Truth. The Gunas are at work according to their different characteristics." He is now unaffected by the touches of pleasure and pain, looking upon them with an equal vision, indepen-

dent, for whom a lump of earth, stone and gold are the same, who possesses an attitude of perfect equality towards those who love him, and towards those who do not love him, and takes praise and blame alike. He will consider fame and ill-fame, friend and enemy as having no distinction. And he will be free from any sense of individual initiative for action. These are the marks of him who has gone beyond the Gunas.

Now the easiest way to rise above the Gunas, the Lord assures Arjuna, is His service and a whole-hearted devotion to Him. This simple and straight path directly enables the devotee to realize his eternal existence. In the knowledge of this true and eternal being of the devotee, which is also the being of the Lord, the devotee realizes his oneness with the Lord who is the glorious, exalted and blissful Truth.

In the above discourse surrender to the supreme Godhead is shown as the easiest path for transmuting the earthly nature of man of the Gunas into his divine and deathless nature, free from the Gunas.

CHAPTER XV

PURUSHOTTAMA YOGA

IN this chapter Sri Krishna teaches once again the path that leads the soul to his highest, inexpressible and infinite existence and union with the supreme Lord who dwells in that divine Existence. From this imperishable existence has evolved out the entire universal manifestation. The process of this manifestation is compared to the Ashwattha or Peepul tree whose roots are above and branches below. The branches spread out upward and downward. The leaves are compared to the Vedic hymns. This tree of evolution (Samsara Vriksha) is nurtured by the Gunas; the sense-objects are its buds and the roots that grow downward are the bonds of Karma for those who live in the world a life of attachment. So long as the mind of man is involved in ignorance he cannot understand what is the form of this tree, where it will meet its end and where is its inception and root. This Ashwattha that has projected from the infinite has to be cut down with the unfailing axe of non-attachment. Thus bereft of attachment, the soul seeks the path beyond Moha and treads it never to return. He reaches the seat of the Purusha through whom the original divine Shakti radiates. When the

soul walks along this path of immortality he is liberated from the ego-sense and illusion, and with the evil of attachment triumphed over, remains ever fixed in the contemplation of the Atman. Now the fever of his desires ceases and he secures immunity from the touches of the Dwandwas—pleasure and pain.

The supreme destination, to which the path takes the soul, is so attributeless and transcendent that there the sun does not shine nor the moon nor fire give light. It is an existence self-illumined and eternal and that is the great abiding place of the Lord.

Now the Lord explains how the individual soul comes into being. He says that a portion of His own supreme Self assumes in the world of activity the nature of the immortal individual soul. The soul thus puts on five senses and the mind inherent in the Prakriti. At the time of the Lord's assumption of the body He brings with him and at its dissolution He takes with Him the senses and the mind, just as the breeze carries with it the fragrance from the flowers. Here the withdrawal of the senses is from their respective seats, which are the five sense-organs of the body, viz. the ear, the eye, the skin, the tongue and the nose and the mind stuff. So long as the Lord as the individual soul is embodied He enjoys through these organs the sense objects. The ignorant do not know that He it is who leaves the body, lives in the body and experiences through the senses, because they are under the

influence of the Gunas which have thrown a veil over their wisdom. The true yogi who strives with determination and faith obtains the vision of the Lord after realizing his Atman. But those who are of dull intellect and without right discipline, however hard they may struggle, cannot behold Him.

To show again that everything that exists has its origin in Him, the Lord says that the light coming from the sun who illumines the whole world and of the moon and fire has its beginning in Him. The Lord is feeding the vegetable kingdom by His vital essence which pervades through the soil and creates the sweet juices or sap in the plant and trees. The Lord is the fire in the bodies of all living beings and, as such, He digests and assimilates all kinds of food through the combination of the breaths with the fire in the body.

The Lord again says that He is the great Truth who resides in the hearts of all beings and that from Him proceed the faculties of recollection and reason and also that state devoid of those faculties. He is the supreme Reality about whom the Vedic scriptures expound. He is the source of all knowledge revealed in the Vedas and from Him have issued forth the great truths of the Vedanta.

Now the Lord describes three aspects of the divine Existence. One is the individual soul or Jiva called the Kshara or the changing and perishable, the second is the Akshara or the imperishable Atman, and the last is the Purushottama, who, pervading all life and manifesta-

tion, is the upholder of all the worlds and the supreme, ultimate and eternal Godhead. He is greater than the Kshara and still greater than the Akshara and, therefore, is the transcendent and the highest Reality. Thus the devotee, freed from ignorance, understands the Lord as the great original Godhead, adores Him offering himself totally to Him. This great mystery has here been revealed and he who knows it becomes enlightened and is once for all liberated from the thraldom of Karma.

From the above an aspirant can clearly perceive the stages through which he has to pass in his upward progress before he could realize the highest summit of God-vision and attain the knowledge of Him in all His sublimity and perfection. The individual soul caught in the grip of the lower Prakriti of the Gunas has to shuffle off the individual sense and merge himself in his real, all-pervading, motionless, eternal existence beyond the Gunas. This is Purusha or Atman—one of the two aspects of Purushottama's supreme Being. Here the body-consciousness and the pairs of opposites, and the cycle of births and deaths are all transcended through the knowledge of the Atman. From this stage the yogi rises still higher and realizes Purushottama in both His aspects—the Purusha and the exalted, higher and creative energy—the Prakriti. Now the yogi reaches a status which baffles expression. Being one with all existences both manifest and unmanifest, he is eternally an illuminated and all-blissful spiritual being.

CHAPTER XVI

THE DIVINE QUALITIES DISTINGUISHED FROM DEMONIACAL

IN this chapter the Lord discourses in detail upon the qualities of two opposite natures which are observed in all human beings. The one is divine and the other demoniacal.

The divine qualities are fearlessness, purity, a steady use of the discriminative faculty, charity, self-control, unselfish service, reading of scriptures, discipline, and frankness. Also non-violence, rectitude, freedom from anger, non-attachment, tranquillity, innocence, kindness towards all creatures, absence of greed, gentleness, modesty, firmness, enthusiasm, mercy, power of endurance, cleanliness and absence of jealousy and pride.

The demoniacal qualities are ostentation, sense of superiority, presumption, anger, cruelty and ignorance.

The divine qualities stand for the salvation of a being, whereas the opposite qualities operate as his bondage. Arjuna, being of a high Sattwic quality, is assured that he possesses the divine attributes. These dual characteristics apply to all living creatures of the world. Having ex-

plained in detail the divine nature the Lord now proceeds to deal at length with the demoniacal nature. The Asuric people are not aware of the proper use of their energy and do not know what things they have to abstain from. They do not understand what purity is and what right conduct is, being given to untruth. They hold that the universe is without an underlying and basic Reality, in other words, that the idea of God is a myth and a hallucination. They think that creatures propagate by mutual intercourse through the impulse of lust and sensual delight. These atheists, utterly obsessed by ignorance, their intellect deadened and their lives degraded, committing dreadful crimes, are born in the world for spreading havoc and death. Perfectly subject to ever burning desires, puffed up with pride, conceit and arrogance, harbouring sinful thoughts, with minds deluded, and, impelled by unholy promptings, they perform actions in the world. Their one ambition in life is to seek satisfaction of their low desires believing that is the highest purpose of life, and thus take a path that leads to utter ruin and debasement.

These of the diabolical nature, enslaved by the bondage of innumerable longings, subjected to lust and wrath, struggle to amass by foul means large quantities of wealth for enjoying sensual delights. They are given to say with pride and self-adulation—"I have this day achieved this gain and tomorrow that object I shall attain; these riches are already mine and also they will be mine hereafter. I have killed this

foe and I shall also destroy others. I myself am God, I enjoy everything, I am glorious, all-powerful and happy. I am rich and belong to a high birth. Who is there equal to me? I will perform sacrifice, I will give charity, I will enjoy life." Thus talk these senseless souls overpowered by ignorance. Confused by various thoughts, caught up inextricably in the meshes of illusion, ever engaged in the task of satisfying their low desires, they fall into the hell of utter misery. They are given to self-praise, are obstinate, puffed up with pride on account of their wealth, and perform for mere show sacrifices against the sanction of the Shastras. Completely overcome by the ego-sense and becoming a prey to power, insolence, lust and anger, these envious souls conceive hatred for the Lord, who is at once seated in the bodies of others and in their own. These rancorous, evil doing, cruel and pernicious people in the world are forced down to be born in satanical wombs. Thus imbued with a devilish nature, under the spell of delusion, they are born again and again without attaining the Lord and ultimately descend into the depths of perdition.

Threefold is the passage that drags the soul down into hell by which he becomes dead to his higher self: lust, anger and greed, these comprise the threefold gate. If a man would aspire to realize the eternal he has to abandon these three evil passions. A man attains freedom and realizes the loftiest aim of life—the greatest good

—by being freed from the hold of these three evils.

He who ignores the injunction of the Shastras and acts only from the urge of his base impulses does not attain the knowledge of his real Self, is not happy and misses the supreme purpose of human life. So it is imperative that the aspirant should be guided by the rules set down in the scriptures by the sages as to what he should do and what he should not do. Here the rules are all pertaining to the practice of self-control and self-discipline. Before the soul can soar to the supreme height of the eternal Life, he must first be pure in thought, word and deed. Love, compassion, forgiveness and peace should ever be the characteristics of all the movements of thought, speech and action. The thought must dwell in the meditation of the all-merciful and loving God seated in his heart and in all creatures and things. The tongue ought to sing and talk of the greatness and glories of the Lord. All activity must assume the one form of self-less service and adoration to the Lord. This triple purity eliminates the ego-sense and enables the aspirant, through complete self-surrender, to attain God—the highest goal of life.

CHAPTER XVII

THREE KINDS OF SHRADDHA

THIS chapter deals with the three kinds of people prevalent among the aspirants. Each one of them follows a path according to his inherent nature—either Sattwic, Rajasic or Tamasic. Verily, a man's conduct in life is shaped by the distinctive Guna of his faith; in other words, a man is what his faith has made him.

The man of Sattwa-guna worships the heavenly deities; of Rajo-guna, the spirits that guard wealth and giants gifted with illusive powers; of Tamo-guna, offers adoration to the spirits of the dead and evil spirits in general. The men of Asuric nature perform hard Tapasya, contrary to Shastras, filled with pride and egoism compelled by the power of their base desires. These dull and ignorant souls mortify the body made up of the elements and also the Lord dwelling in the inner sheaths of it, who is the real dweller and enjoyer in the body.

According to the Gunas a man's taste for particular food is determined. So there are three kinds of food as also of sacrifice, Tapas and charity. The food that is dear to the man of Sattwic temperament is such as would increase

vitality, power, strength, health, happiness and peace. This food is tasteful, pure, invigorating and pleasant. The Rajasic man is fond of the food that is bitter, sour, saltish, hot, pungent, insipid and fiery which causes pain, sorrow and disease. Now the man of Tamo-guna holds cold, tasteless, rotten, nauseating, stale and dirty food dear to him.

The sacrificial Karmas or actions performed in the name and for the sake of God, without expectation of any reward, in accordance with the rules of Shastras, with the firm faith that they ought to be done, are considered to be Sattwic or pure. Here the Karma is performed in a Nishkama spirit as an aid to the realization of God. For Nishkama Karma enables the aspirant to achieve the needed purity of mind for attaining divine knowledge.

The sacrifice offered to God desiring for its fruit and also for showing himself off as a holy man, i.e. for ostentation is of the Rajasic nature. Here the aspirant's goal is clearly material enjoyment and so his Karma is coloured with desire. The aspiration of knowing the Reality is absent in this sacrifice.

The lowest class of sacrifice is of Tamo-guna which is performed in opposition to the dictates of the Shastras, without sharing food with others, without remembering the Lord of sacrifice and without giving presents to saintly and pious souls. This sacrifice is made with absolutely no faith, and it relates to the utterly selfish nature

of man who lives and works for his own sake with a vision self-centred and narrow. He lives only for the sake of his sensual enjoyments and has no sympathy and concern with the rest of the world.

Now the Lord enunciates different kinds of Tapas which relates to the purification of the body, the speech and the mind. The Tapas of the body is the worship of the heavenly deities, of persons with divine knowledge, of spiritual preceptors and of the men of wisdom. It includes also cleanliness, honesty, Brahmacharya and non-violence.

The Tapas of speech consists in not giving pain to others, in always speaking the truth and uttering such words as would yield cheer and solace to others. It consists also of reading scriptures which deal with devotion to the Lord and describe His glories.

The Tapas of mind is contentment, harmony, silence, practice for the control of mind and elevating and pure thoughts.

The three-fold Tapas in thought, word and deed practised through the greatest Shraddha in a spirit of Nishkama grants the man of Sattwaguna perfect equanimity, and peace. While those who strive to attain this triple purity with a view to obtain reverence, fame and adoration and for show are of the Rajasic nature. The peace and harmony these people enjoy is unsteady and transient. The Tamasic man with reason distorted practises this Sadhana accom-

panied by self-mortification or with a view to ruin others.

Again three kinds of alms-giving are described. The alms given to those from whom no return is expected, knowing that it is given to the right person and at the right place is considered to be Sattwic. The alms given, expecting a return or wishing for merit, or halfheartedly, is taken as Rajo-guna. The alms given at improper time and place and to undeserving people, accompanied with insult and derision, is held to be of the Tamasic nature.

Next the Lord expounds the manner in which sacrifice, alms-giving, and austerity are to be performed. These must have three essential features underlying them. One is that they should be done as emanating from the eternal Reality; second, they should be done without expecting any reward by those whose aim is liberation; third, they should be performed with perfect goodwill having all the purity and sincerity of heart. So these three elevating and ennobling kinds of work have to be performed with perfect Shraddha in the name and for the sake of the absolute Truth. Whereas any such work done lacking in faith, i.e. without dedicating it to the Eternal will serve no useful purpose for the doer in the earthly life or in the life beyond.

The Lord, in other words, declares that when all the actions of man are performed in a spirit of total surrender to the supreme Lord, he attains the highest goal of life, namely immortal freedom and bliss.

CHAPTER XVIII

RENUNCIATION AND YOGA

THE last chapter of the Gita is a compendium or a brief masterly summary of all that is told in the foregoing chapters. It reveals the conclusive word and message of the entire Gita. In fact, it brings the whole teaching to its culmination, settling once for all, in clear and decisive language, the many problems dealt with so far in a more or less straggling and disjointed manner.

At the outset, Arjuna raises the most vital question on the solution of which depends the entire attitude of a human being towards life and action. The question is: wherein lies the difference between Sannyasa and Tyaga? What are the several characteristics of these terms? Sri Krishna replies; Sannyasa or renunciation means abandoning such works as are tainted with the desire for the fruit, i.e. to perform only such work as of self-discipline and Tapas. Tyaga denotes the giving up of the desire for the reward of all kinds of action. While in the former, particular kinds of Karma are entirely renounced, in the latter all Karmas are performed without desire for the fruit. It is held action itself is an evil and it should be abandoned and

it is also emphasised that works of sacrifice, gift and penance should never be relinquished. These are the conflicting opinions and injunctions of some or other men of great understanding.

Now the Lord declares His own decisive opinion. With all the force of His authority He says that works of sacrifice, gift and penance should be performed, because for the soul in his march towards the goal of liberation, these works purify the mind. But these actions must, of course, be done without attachment and without expecting any reward. These prescribed works must not be given up, and if any one does so, he is clearly deluded with ignorance.

When a Sadhaka out of fear of bodily pain gives up action, which tends to his elevation and spiritual progress he does not receive any benefit from such abandonment. Here it is clearly evident that in Nishkama service and sacrifice the aspirant should be prepared to suffer physically if he would desire to progress towards the Truth. All acts of self-discipline and self-sacrifice have to be done without question, forsaking attachment and desire for the result. A Sadhana performed according to set rules and regulations, and carried on with perseverance is essential for self-purification. When perfect purity is attained, the non-attached Sadhaka has neither aversion to painful action, nor attraction for the pleasant action. Since his attachment both for action and its fruit has ceased, he will undertake any action, desirable or undesirable, for the welfare of all beings and creatures.

The gist of the above verses is that renunciation of action is not the way to liberation, but what is essentially needed is renunciation of the fruit of action. So long as a soul is living in the body he cannot totally abandon action. The very fact of his having assumed the physical garb urges him on to activity. It is immaterial in what kind of action the body is engaged, but what is required is a complete detachment of the soul's association with the action and the result. For him the dual aspect of Karma, good and evil, does not exist. In fact, Karma is looked upon by one who is obsessed by Moha as good, evil and a mixture of the two. These distinctions have significance only for the ignorant, and not for the liberated who has destroyed Moha by a surrender of all his actions to the supreme Lord.

The Lord now explains that there are five causes or vehicles through which the embodied soul performs actions. The body, the ego, subtle and gross organs, different kinds of inherent powers and fate which controls the forces within and without. For every action of man, done by his body, speech and mind, right or wrong, takes place owing to these five causes.

The ignorance of the soul lies in his thinking that he, as the individual self apart from the world-existence, is the doer. Due to a distorted vision, born of an undisciplined intellect, he fails to understand that God is the sole Doer. Therefore, in the field of action, the ego-sense is the

sole cause for the bondage of Karma. He who is free from egoism and has attained this supreme knowledge of the ever unaffected Atman may perform any action, however apparently terrible, and remain unfettered by its reaction; he may even do the work of slaughter, which is considered to be the most heinous action, without being affected by it.

For every action there comes a prompting from within, and this impulse has sprung from three causes, namely, knowledge, the knowable and the knower. And, again, three things bring about the accomplishment of an action, which are: the organ of action, action and the doer of action.

Knowledge, work, and the doer, being the basis of action, actuate people differently according to the difference of the Gunas. The Sattwic knowledge is that knowledge by which a man disciplines his mind to behold one imperishable Truth in all beings, the one supreme unity in all varied diversity—in all the multiple manifestations. That knowledge which looks upon all the varied lives as having separate existences, i.e. that they are animated and actuated by their own individual powers, is to be understood as of the Rajasic or passionate nature. But the knowledge which considers that each and every object and being is existing by itself and is complete and perfect by itself, which proposition is not supported by reason or experience, is of Tamo-guna. Here the underlying unity of all

existences is entirely ignored and the vision is circumscribed and is highly egoistic.

Next follows the nature of action according to the three Gunas. The action of Sattwa-guna is according to the dictates of the Shastras, free from the desire for reward, without attachment and unaffected by likes and dislikes. The action that is performed, induced by desire or through the impulse of egoism, or with great endeavour, is held to be of the Rajasic quality. Then, again, the action done in thoughtless folly, ignoring the necessary fitness for it and having no thought for its baneful results, such as loss and pain to others, belong to the Tamasic nature.

Among the doers of action there are also three kinds. He is the pure or Sattwic doer, who acts without Moha, free from egoism, with a firm and unshakable will and remains unaffected either by victory or defeat. The doer who is urged on to action by the force of desire, bent upon obtaining its reward and so selfish, pain-inflicting, unholy and susceptible to the touches of joy and grief is said to possess the Rajasic nature. Again, he is under the sway of Tamo-guna who has a nature which is quarrelsome, low, obstinate, deceiving, revengeful, lazy, hopeless and irregular.

Buddhi or the reasoning faculty and the steadiness of the will are also divided into three classes in relation to the three Gunas. That understanding which perceives a clear distinction between the use of power and the non-use of it,

what is rightly to be done and what should be avoided, fear and fearlessness and bondage and freedom is of Sattwic Buddhi. The Buddhi which is filled with Rajo-guna does not possess the power of discrimination between Dharma and Adharma and between what should be done and what should not be done. The Tamasic understanding is so enveloped with the darkness of ignorance that it takes Adharma to be Dharma and perceives all things in a distorted and topsy-turvy manner.

That steadiness of the will which swerves not from and is fixed in yoga by which one controls the restless mind and regulates the life-breaths and the senses is of the pure Sattwic quality. That firmness of the will by which one ruled by Moha and, hankering for the fruit, clings to Dharma and performs actions for obtaining riches and other worldly objects is considered to be Rajasic. Again, that firmness of the will on account of which one becomes foolish, is addicted to sleep and disturbed by fear, sorrow and dejection and is also filled with pride is of Tamo-guna.

Now the Lord describes the three kinds of happiness for which all creatures are striving. A clear knowledge on this subject will enable the aspirant to aim at that delight alone which kills all pain and sorrow. That experience which is felt at first as bitter as poison but at the end turns out to be sweet as nectar—an experience of pure bliss born of the knowledge of the Atman—is

of the nature of Sattwa-guna. The joy resulting from the contact of the senses with their objects, felt at the outset as sweet as nectar but proving ultimately like poison, is declared Rajasic. Whilst that joy which is from the first to last the outcome of utter ignorance of the Self and is derived from sleep, torpor and carelessness is called Tamasic.

In the above teachings of Sri Krishna, wherein He has dwelt at length on the distinctive nature of the three Gunas, he has shown conclusively that the highest Guna is Sattwa-guna and by the steady preponderance of it over the lower Gunas the aspirant fits himself for the highest vision of God. When such a vision is attained, the aspirant is lifted above all Gunas and reaches a perfect state of liberation and immortal bliss. Here it is observed that the pure Sattwic quality or Shuddha Sattwa bears all the attributes of the ultimate vision aspired for. Shuddha Sattwa stands for an awakened and illumined intelligence—so illumined by the very light of the Atman granting the aspirant a foretaste of the equality, bliss, purity and freedom of the supreme Atman. Here the state attained, although a highly necessary status for the aspirant, cannot be held to be a permanent state, as by nature the Gunas are subject to changes. The equal vision and immortal peace become fixed, sustained and eternal only by completely transcending the Gunas through absolute absorption in and oneness with God.

The Gunas that are described above so bind the soul to the wheel of Karma and the consequent births and deaths, that not only amongst mankind, but even amongst the gods, a soul freed from the clutches of the Gunas is hard to find. Here the Lord suggests that transcending the Gunas is a most difficult and rare achievement.

Now the Lord throws light upon the question as to what determines the nature of an embodied soul and what is the suitable field of his activity in consonance with that nature. The inherent nature of a human being is formed by the predominant Guna that sways over him deciding the particular action for which he is fitted.

The Brahmana is he whose Karmas reflect a calm and peaceful nature, the power of self-control, the steady observance of the rules of discipline, purity, compassion, rectitude, enlightenment, divine knowledge and perfect faith in God.

The Kshatriya is he whose actions exhibit heroism, glory, steadiness of will, skill, undaunted courage, generosity and the qualities necessary for a ruler of a kingdom.

The Vaishya's field of work according to his Guna is agriculture, protection of cows and trade. The Shudra is he who by his nature or Guna is fit only for a life of service.

These different kinds of Karma are determined by the inherent nature of an individual. Through the fulness of experience of the active

life, every one of these with the four natures can reach God by a proper discharge of the Karma fallen to his lot. While performing Karma according to his individual Swabhava Dharma the man, if he adores the Lord in his own heart as the supreme and all-pervading Truth from whom the worlds and beings have projected forth, and dedicates all his Karmas to Him, attains perfection.

It is better for a man to adjust his life and action according to his Swabhava, though unproductive of worldly or heavenly benefits, than undertake and discharge, however efficiently, the work which belongs to the nature of another. In short, the Karma performed which is born of one's own Swabhava, whatever that Karma be, leads him to perfection. Here Swadharma has a wide significance. Performing Karma according to Swadharma signifies a complete dedication of all actions of any particular nature to the supreme Lord of the universe. Here Swabhava determines the nature of action and such action is known to be of the divine Shakti emanating from the Lord. Therefore the Lord warns Arjuna that the Karma determined by Swabhava should not be given up although it might appear as improper. All egoistic work is tainted as fire by smoke. But he, whose mind is unattached to anything and who has controlled the mind and killed all desires, through internal renunciation of the egoistic impulse of action, becomes free from the touch or reaction of Karma.

Once again, the Lord describes the highest status of divine knowledge, which a soul attains through the purity and light which he gained by following the path of self-surrender in all his actions. The process of the Sadhana for reaching this exalted state is reiterated. The necessary qualifications and attainments are the first things to be acquired before the soul enjoys utter freedom and peace and union with the almighty Lord.

The needed acquirements are: an awakened intellect, purity of thought, a firm control of mind, imperviousness to external sounds and to the attraction of the sense objects and absence of lust and malice.

In order to attain perfect union with the Godhead through the practice of meditation the yogi resorts to solitude, and restrains the outgoing energy through a control of speech, body and mind, and thus reaches a state of complete non-attachment. Further, giving up egoism, violence, pride, desire, anger and greed, he becomes free from the individual sense and enjoys the peace and bliss of the eternal Truth. Now having realized the Eternal, satisfied in the peace of the Atman, he has neither grief nor desire left and gets the vision of equality with regard to all creatures, which entitles him to supreme devotion to the Lord. Through such devotion he understands the Lord in His true being and also as to who and what He is. Thus knowing Him in His real existence, the devotee is merged

into the all-comprehensive being of God. The devotee now does all work by taking entire refuge in the Lord and, by His grace, attains the loftiest status or the dwelling place of the imperishable and eternal Reality.

Therefore, the imperative command of Sri Krishna is to renounce from the mind the attachment to all Karmas by a total dedication of them to the Lord, to aspire for Him alone, to keep the light of discrimination ever burning in his Buddhi and to have the mind ceaselessly contemplating on Him. The hindrances shall be overcome by the grace of the Lord through His continuous remembrance. If through egoism a man does not act according to these teachings he would only be following the road to utter destruction.

The case of Arjuna is typical. There is many a soul in the world who out of sheer despair caused by Moha rejects action which he has to perform in accordance with the Swabhava. Such renunciation of action is the result of the impulse from the ego and so the resolution is vain and improper. This means that it is useless for a man under the spell of the ego to make plans and resolutions with regard to undertaking or rejection of action. Therefore, the Lord in forceful and direct words says to Arjuna: "Arjuna, you determine not to engage in the fight because you are under the sway of egoism but your resolution is of no avail. My divine Prakriti, which is the irresistible motive power which brings about all activities in the universe,

will force you to action, i.e. the nature of the warrior in you will rise up and drive you to the fight."

Here the Lord clearly shows that renunciation of action is not the way to liberation and peace. The embodied soul being an instrument in the hands of Prakriti must be doing some work or other according to his individual nature. Man is, after all, a tool worked by Prakriti, and he works whether he wills or not by the urgings of his nature. The Lord, residing in the hearts of all creatures, causes His whole universal Lila to move by His supreme will just as the potter turns the pot on his wheel. He exhorts: "Knowing this great secret O, Bharata, without a moment's loss of time run to the Lord and take complete refuge in Him. If you do this, by His grace you will attain the immortal status of perfect peace and bliss." In the above lines we perceive a clear indication that the height of achievement lies in utter self-surrender of the devotee to the supreme Lord of the universe. In this alone lies the hope and salvation of the soul. All the various Sadhanas are performed with the one ultimate object of reaching this state of perfect and unqualified self-surrender. Because self-surrender alone destroys the ego-sense and enables the soul not only to realize his immortality but also, through universal vision, to discover his eternal union and oneness with God, who is at once immanent and transcendent. Here is seen the grandest finale to the entire teaching of the Gita.

Through the previous discourses the Lord shows the path by following which the soul can be liberated from the illusion of ego and thraldom of karma and thus made to realize his immortality as the Atman. Therefrom the soul is led onwards to the glorious vision of God in all the manifestations at last culminating in the highest attainment, viz. a total dedication and surrender of the soul in every respect to the Lord.

In the two Slokas that follow the Lord has revealed the supreme essence of the whole Gita. The soul's bondage is due to Moha, desire and ego. To break off these bonds what is required is pure aspiration coupled with dispassion, for the realization of God—the great Lord of the universe. As the first step, the aspirant through remembrance, devotion, meditation and Nishkama Karma attains the knowledge of the Atman—the immutable, immortal, nameless and formless aspect of God, thereby rising beyond the body-consciousness, Gunas and Dwandwas. At this stage comes the higher devotion by which the aspirant beholds the entire universal manifestation or Prakriti as the veritable expression or form of God Himself. Now he beholds in all changes, movements and actions of the universe the one divine power emanating from the Lord at work. In this exalted devotion, not only does the soul realize his perfect identity with God, but also enjoys the bliss of eternal union with the Lord in all the activities of life. To reach this highest and most blessed summit of God-

realization, the Lord with words filled with His infinite grace exhorts: "Through utter devotion and ceaseless remembrance dissolve thy mind in Me, love Me alone beyond all things. Dedicate entirely thy whole life and its activities to Me. In all manner of ways surrender thyself to Me. If thou doest this thou shalt certainly attain Me. I assure thee thou art extremely loving to Me."

"Giving up all dogmas, doctrines, creeds and cults created by the mind and all ideas relating to the rules and regulations of actions determined by the Gunas, take complete refuge in Me alone and I shall liberate thee from all bondages. I will make thee perfectly sinless and pure, and grant thee the immortal status of eternal bliss and peace."

The above words of Sri Krishna ring out the most soothing music of His world saving message.

Here a suggestion is made that this sublime knowledge should not be given to the undisciplined and uninitiated or to any one who denies God and to those having no faith in Him and who speak ill of Him. This is said for two reasons: the uninitiated, without grasping the true import of the teaching, might get bewildered and throw his life into confusion. The other is: so far as the faithless ones are concerned the teaching will be simply wasted on them.

But the Lord assures: Blessed is he who expounds the divine teaching to His devotees accompanied by a spirit of perfect faith and trust in Him. He will have then all his doubts destroy-

ed and will enter into the being of the Lord. Again the Lord says that such a devotee is rendering to the Lord the dearest service and so shall be considered by the Lord as the best beloved in the world. He who has imbibed the full significance of these discourses will become the Lord's devotee of the highest order, who has united knowledge with devotion and thus got absorbed in the supreme Reality and, at the same time, holds eternal communion with Him. Of course, this high and ultimate status is reached after the necessary preparation—the manner of which is clearly shown in the message couched in the discourses of the Gita.

For the study of the Gita what is primarily needed is faith or a willingness to hear, grasp and put into practice the great truths presented therein.

Arjuna who represents the individual soul in answer to the question of Sri Krishna replies, overflowing with delight, that he is entirely freed from delusion and that he has through the grace of the almighty Lord attained the knowledge of his immortal life and existence. He further asserts that his doubts have vanished and his will has become fixed and strong and that he would submissively follow the command of the Lord. Practically the message of the Gita ends here.

CONCLUSION

A brief and concise summary of the whole Gita will now be presented to the readers. At the start the Lord awakens the ignorant soul to the existence of the root evil which has brought about his bondage and the utter oblivion of his divine and immortal nature. This root evil is Moha or attachment which has sprung from the seed called desire—the primal cause of ignorance. The eradication of desire and Moha means liberation. Liberation consists in the identity of the soul with the immortal Atman. This deathless state is realized only when the mind of man, through a burning aspiration for freedom, is withdrawn from its association with the perishable body and the objects of the senses and is directed through concentration towards the eternal Truth of his being. The soul has to pass through various Sadhanas or spiritual practices before he can unveil the glory and magnificence of the Atman dwelling within him. In fact, ignorance consists in the forgetfulness of the soul of his eternal and infinite nature. So all Sadhanas are for keeping up a ceaseless remembrance of the great Truth which the soul has forgotten and which he is in reality. Ceaseless remembrance brings on a divine consciousness in which the soul discovers himself to be the all-

pervading, eternal and changeless Truth. In this attainment the soul rises beyond the notion of the body and enjoys the bliss of immortality by rising superior to the Gunas of Prakriti and the Dwandwas born therefrom.

The liberated soul freed through the realization of Atman, which is only one aspect of the Lord, still strives to know and merge in the supreme Godhead in all His aspects and existences. Here starts the path of utter self-dedication leading the awakened soul to a vision and status which baffles description. He now beholds the entire universe and all beings, creatures and things in it as the very expression and revealment of the invisible, infinite, immutable, eternal, unthinkable and transcendent supreme Reality. He experiences not only the unchanging calmness and peace of his oneness with God in the universe and beyond but also the bliss of the pure, intimate and loving communion with him in the visible universe and all activities in it. So it is made clear at the end of the Gita that the highest acme of God-realization is to be a perfect devotee of the Lord—a veritable embodiment of divine knowledge, divine action, and divine love. Such a devotee is the very form and expression of God or God Himself in human form. Sri Krishna—the Purushottama has revealed Himself in his heart and has absorbed him into His ineffable and extremely wonderful Being. This is the goal and Gita Sandesh is to take the soul to this goal.



GLOSSARY

A

Abhyasa	Practice.
Adharma	Unrighteousness.
Adi-maya	First principle of creation.
Ahankara	Ego.
Akasha	Ether.
Akshara	The indestructible Spirit.
Amrita	Immortality.
Ashwattha	Peepul tree.
Asuras	Demons.
Asuric	Demoniac.
Atman	Supreme Soul.
Atmic	Pertaining to the Supreme Soul.
Avatar	Incarnation.

B

Bhakta	Devotee.
Brahmacharya ..	Celibacy, continence.
Brahman	The Supreme Being.
Brahmana	The man belonging to the first of the four original castes of the Hindus—knower of the Brahman.
Brahmic	Relating to Brahman.
Buddhi	Intellect, understanding.

D

Daivi	Divine.
Devas	Celestial beings.
Dharma	Righteousness, right course of conduct.
Dwandwas	Pairs of opposites such as pleasure and pain.

G

Guna	Any one of the three properties constituting Nature.
Guru	Spiritual preceptor.

J

Jagat-guru	World Teacher.
Jiva	Individual soul.
Jnana	Divine Knowledge.

K

Kama	Desire.
Karma	Action.
Karmic	Pertaining to action.
Karmayoga	The path of selfless action.
Karmayogi	He who performs selfless action.
Kshara	The destructible.
Kshatriya	The man who belongs to the second of the four castes of the Hindus—Warrior.
Kshetra	Field.
Kumaras	The four sons of Brahma.

L

Lila	Play.
Loka-Sangraha ..	The welfare or uplift of the world.

M

Maha-shakti	The supreme Power of God.
Manus	Law givers.
Moha	Attachment to perishable objects.
Mula-Prakriti ..	The primeval matter of three qualities.

N

Nirguna	Free from the three properties or qualities of Nature.
Nishkama	Selfless: desireless.
Nishkamata	The state of desirelessness.

O

Omkar	The monosyllabled mystic sound OM made up of A. U. M. The first word in creation—signifies Brahman.

P

Para-bhakti	Supreme devotion attainable after self-knowledge.
Paramatman	The Supreme Spirit.
Para-Prakriti ..	The higher creative principle of manifestation.
Prakriti	Nature both gross and subtle.
Pranayama	Breath-control.
Purusha	The unaffected, witness-aspect of God.

R

Rajas	The quality of action.
Rajo-guna	The quality of action.
Rishis	Sages.

S

Sadhaka	Spiritual aspirant.
Sadhana	Spiritual discipline.
Samadhi	The state of eternal tranquillity attained through abstract meditation.
Samsara-Vraksha ..	The tree of life.
Sandesh	Message.
Sankalpa	The faculty of making plans.
Sannyasa	The last of the four stages in a man's life as set down in Hindu shastras; renunciation of worldly life.
Sannyasi	Ascetic or hermit.
Sattwa	The quality of light, harmony and peace.
Sattwa-guna	The quality of light, harmony and peace.
Shakti	Divine Power.
Shastras	Scriptures.
Shraddha	Firmness of faith.

Shuddha	Pure.
Shudras	The fourth caste of the Hindu social order—serving class.
Slokas	Verses.
Swabhava	Natural tendency.
Swadharma	Rule of action according to one's nature.
Swarup	Being.

T

Tamas	} The quality of dullness, delusion and darkness.
Tamo-guna	
Tamasic	Pertaining to Tamas.
Tapas	Austerity.
Tapaswi	Doer of austerities.
Tapasya	The course of austerity.
Tri-gunas	The three qualities inherent in Nature.
Tyagi	He who has renounced all the desires of the heart.

U

Upadesh	Teaching.

V

Vairagya	Dispassion.
Vaishyas	The third caste of the Hindu social order—agriculturists and traders.
Vedanta	The philosophy of the Upanishads. The end of Vedas.
Vedas	The four great original sacred books of the Hindus.
Vedic	Relating to Vedas.
Vidya	Spiritual knowledge.

Y

Yoga	The state of union with God.
Yogi	A God-realized soul.
Yogic	Relating to yoga.
Yugas	Eras or ages.

BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN

CONSTITUENT INSTITUTIONS

MUMBADEVI SANSKRIT MAHAVIDYALAYA
An Oriental College teaching Sanskrit and Shastras by traditional methods for Shastri and Acharya (recognised as equivalent to B.A. & M.A. respectively) and for Vachaspati (research).

SARAL SANSKRIT PARIKSHA VIBHAG
Department of Easy Sanskrit Examinations for Prarambh, Pravesh, Parichay and Kovid Examinations.

UCHHATAR SANSKRIT PARIKSHA VIBHAG
Department of Higher Sanskrit Examinations for Praveshika, Purva Madhyama, Uttara Madhyama, Shastri, Acharya and Vachaspati Examinations.

GITA VIDYALAYA
An Academy for the study of Indian Culture with special reference to the Bhagavad Gita.

MUNGALAL GOENKA SAMSHODHAN MANDIR
A Post-graduate and Research Institute recognised by the University of Bombay coaching students for the degrees of M.A. and Ph.D.

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One of the major schemes of the Bhavan is the publication of the HISTORY AND CULTURE OF THE INDIAN PEOPLE in 10 volumes. So far seven volumes have been published viz., (1) The Vedic Age (2) The Age of Imperial Unity (3) Classical Age (4) The Age of Imperial Kanauj (5) The Struggle for Empire (6) The Delhi Sultanate and (7) British Paramountcy and Indian Renaissance. The remaining volumes will follow at an interval of 8-10 months. This is considered to be the first successful attempt at re-writing the History of India by her own sons on a very exhaustive basis.

MUNSHI SARASWATI MANDIR
An Institute of Culture with a Library consisting of over 65,000 volumes including many Indological volumes, Museum consisting of old and valuable palm leaf manuscripts, coins, paintings etc.

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BHARATIYA KALA KENDRA
The Kala Kendra is devoted to the development of Drama, Dance and Music. The Kala Kendra produces dramas and dance ballets in English as well as in Hindi, Gujarati and Marathi to encourage amateur talents. An Inter-Collegiate Dramatic competition, in several languages, is also sponsored by it every year for the same purpose. Ideal facilities for these activities are provided in the Bhavan's auditorium—the Kanji Khetsey Sabhagriha.

BHARATIYA SANGIT SHIKSHAPITH
An Academy of Indian Classical Music, affiliated to the Bhatkhande Sangit Vidyapith, Lucknow, which is recognised by the Central Government for courses leading to the Bachelor of Music Degree.

BHARATIYA NARTAN SHIKSHAPITH
An Academy of Dance for teaching the four systems of Indian dancing, viz., Manipuri, Kathak, Kathakali and Bharata Natyam.

BOOK UNIVERSITY
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Apart from our HISTORY and BOOK UNIVERSITY SERIES, this department also publishes the results of the research and other activities of the various Mandirs of the Bhavan and books of cultural value. Its publications include:

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Singhi Jain Series: Critical editions of ancient works and manuscripts connected with Jain religion and literature. Published volumes 52.

The Glory that was Gurjaradesa: A comprehensive study of Gujarat in 7 volumes. Published volumes 2.

Munshi Sahitya: Social novels, historical plays, biographical works of Munshiji and Smt. Lilavati Munshi in Gujarati and English, the copyright whereof has been kindly gifted by them to the Bhavan. Published volumes 80.

JOURNALS

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Bhavan's Journal: An English Fortnightly devoted to life, literature and culture started in August 1954. Present circulation 50,000 copies. Annual Subscription Rs. 6.50.

Bharati: A Hindi Fortnightly started in August 1956. Annual Subscription Rs. 6.50.

Samarpan: A Gujarati Fortnightly started in November 1959. Annual Subscription Rs. 6.50.

DEPARTMENT OF PRINTING
Bhavan's press where all its publications and periodicals are printed and where practical training in printing is given to the students of the Bhavan's College of Journalism, Advertising and Printing.

COLLEGE OF JOURNALISM, ADVERTISING & PRINTING
An Institution for providing systematic instruction in Journalism, Advertising, Sales Promotion, Public Relations and Printing.

M. M. COLLEGE OF ARTS & N. M. INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE
The College was opened by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel in June 1946. It is affiliated to the Bombay University for courses of studies leading to B.A., B.Sc., M.A., M.Sc., and Ph.D. degrees.

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The College was opened by Dr. Jivraj Mehta, Chief Minister, Gujarat, in June 1962. It is affiliated to the Gujarat University for courses of studies leading to B.A. & B.Sc. degrees.

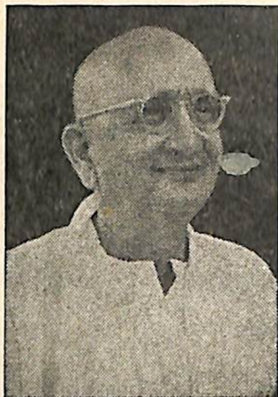
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The College was opened in June 1962 for courses of studies leading to B.E. (Civil, Mechanical and Electrical) degree. It is affiliated to the Bombay University.

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The School coaches students for the Cambridge School Leaving Examination, the medium of instruction being English. Sanskrit and Hindi are compulsory subjects. Music, Indian dancing and painting are also taught to the students.

BHAVAN'S ACADEMY OF LANGUAGES, NEW DELHI AND BOMBAY
The Academy teaches four foreign languages, viz., German, Russian, French and Spanish.

MUNGALAL GOENKA SANSKRIT TRUST
The income from this Trust goes to support the Post-graduate and Research Department of the Bhavan.

ASSOCIATED BODIES
Sanskrit Vishva Parishad, Bharatiya Stree Seva Sangh, Bombay Astrological Society.



THE AUTHOR

After receiving initiation of the *Ram Mantra* from his father, Swami Ramdas, who was then known as Vittal Rao, renounced the worldly life in 1922 and wandered as a mendicant Sadhu all over India and in the Himalayas, in a frenzy of God-intoxication, with the holy and all-powerful Ram Mantra ever on his tongue, and with God as his only refuge and guide. His was the completest surrender to the Will of God.

Many years of wandering life brought him finally back to South Kanara. Having attained spiritual liberation and God-vision, he started his mission to guide and serve mankind in order to awaken it to the awareness of God. He founded an Ashram—named Anandashram—near Kanhangad, N. Kerala, which is fostered by love and care by Mother Krishnabai, his foremost disciple and a Self-realized soul. Swami Ramdas' writings come from the deeps of Reality and therefore go straight to the heart. In 1954, he and Mother Krishnabai went on a world tour and hundreds of their devotees, friends, and admirers who had loved and venerated them from a distance, had a chance to come into close contact with them. Since the last three decades Anandashram has been a powerful spiritual beacon, and thousands have been constantly visiting it, carrying home with them the torch of Light, Love and Service lit at the feet of the great Master.

Swami Ramdas attained *mahanirvana* in July 1963.